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SOCIAL STUDIES

Class 8 Part 1

AN EKLAVYA PUBLICATION

A Word at the Beginning...

We are glad to present to you the first English edition of the class 8 text book on Social Studies developed by Eklavya.

The Eklavya Institute for Educational Research and Innovative Action initiated its Social Science teaching Programme in 1984. The then government of Madhya Pradesh and the SCERT accepted Eklavya's proposal to develop a new way of teaching the social sciences in the mainstream school system. Nine government middle schools were selected for this experiment. The textbooks of class 6, 7 and 8 developed by Eklavya were broadly in-keeping with the state curriculum and syllabus, and were allowed to be prescribed for these nine schools instead of the SCERT textbooks. This experiment was launched in schools in 1986 and ended in 2002.

The programme did not consist of textbooks alone. Teachers were involved through training workshops and monthly meetings. The teaching of the lessons in actual classroom conditions was closely observed and feedback was collected on the chapters. A new scheme was evolved to evaluate students on their understanding of concepts and their hold on the skills of information gathering, information processing and application. An open book examination system was designed for this purpose and it was hoped to minimise the negative impact of rote learning in social science.

Scholars from many universities and research institutions were deeply involved in the progress of the work and actively participated in it. The feedback and reviews from teachers, parents, children and academicians enabled Eklavya to revise and improve the books further.

The books thus have their roots in the mainstream schooling system of the country and were originally written in Hindi. However, as people came to know about the books, many people from non-Hindi states as well as English medium schools began demanding English editions of the Eklavya textbooks. The present edition is therefore our attempt to make available our work to a larger audience. This edition has also given us the opportunity of revising and updating the material contained in the Hindi edition.

The material of the Hindi edition of class 8 was initially translated into English by Subir Shukla. Karen Haydock has designed and illustrated most of the book and has contributed to the revision of content as well. The photographs have been taken from many published works and it is not possible to acknowledge them all. We record our deeply felt gratitude and appreciation for the efforts of all those who helped in developing and producing this book.

We hope this book will encourage intense interactions among students and between students and teachers. Many other resources such as atlases, pictures, reference books from libraries, newspapers, visits and surveys, and personal experiences will be brought in to enrich the interaction. True education results from high quality interactions and dialogues and this textbook is meant to enunciate this vision of education. We also hope that many of you who will use the material provided here will share your suggestions, questions and needs with us. Where necessary and possible, we can try and provide support to your efforts in the class room as well. We look forward to reflecting, improving and innovating further on our inputs through such interactions with you.

There has been a widely felt need for a fresh look at the curriculum of social sciences and the methods of teaching. This has led to considerable debate and fresh efforts by government as well as non-government agencies. Many schools and teachers are trying to create innovative spaces in their daily work with children. More than ever before there is need today to reach out to each other and share our experiences and materials. It is necessary to concretely debate on what is desirable and what is possible in social science teaching. It is necessary to concretely try and make the desirable possible – to move from complaints and theories to small changes in practice and then keep refining and improving the practice. It is to such an ongoing struggle for true education that we dedicate our small efforts.

Contents

HISTORY

1. Akbar - the Mughal Emperor 3
2. The Amirs of the Mughal Empire 17
3. Village Life in Mughal Times 27
4. The Times of Emperor Aurangzeb 40
5. Foreign Trade in Mughal Times 48



CIVICS

6. Banks 61
7. Taxes 72
8. The Constitution and Fundamental Rights and Duties (Part 1) 83
9. The Constitution and Fundamental Rights and Duties (Part 2) 94
10. The Central Government 101

GEOGRAPHY

11. How Hot? How Cold? - Temperature Patterns 117
12. Introduction to the Geography of India 133
13. The Himalayas 136
14. India's Peninsular Plateau 150
15. The Northern Plain 169
16. The Coastal Plains and Islands 179
17. The Thar Desert 194



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9. The Constitution and Fundamental Rights and Duties (Part 2) 94
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13. The Himalayas 136
14. India's Peninsular Plateau 150
15. The Northern Plain 169
16. The Coastal Plains and Islands 179
17. The Thar Desert 194



HISTORY

The Mughal Period



The story so far

The story ahead

You will also read about how European traders came in the 17th century, and how this led to the establishment of British rule. For almost 200 years large parts of the Indian subcontinent were ruled by the British. The policies of the British rulers made very big changes in the lives of the people of India. During this period peasants, workers, adivasis, traders, and educated people of India struggled for a long time to free the country from British rule. You will read about the national movement and how independence was eventually won.

Akbar

the Mughal Emperor

(Ruling: 1556-1605)

The Beginning of Mughal Rule in India

This picture shows a Mughal army ready for battle. The soldiers have several new kinds of weapons that are not seen in the pictures of earlier times. Can you identify them?



Such was the army of the Mughal emperor Babar (babar). Babar had been ruling in Afghanistan and he was trying to conquer more lands. At that time Delhi was being ruled by the Afghan king, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. In 1526 the armies of Babar and Lodi had a battle at Panipat, north of Delhi. With

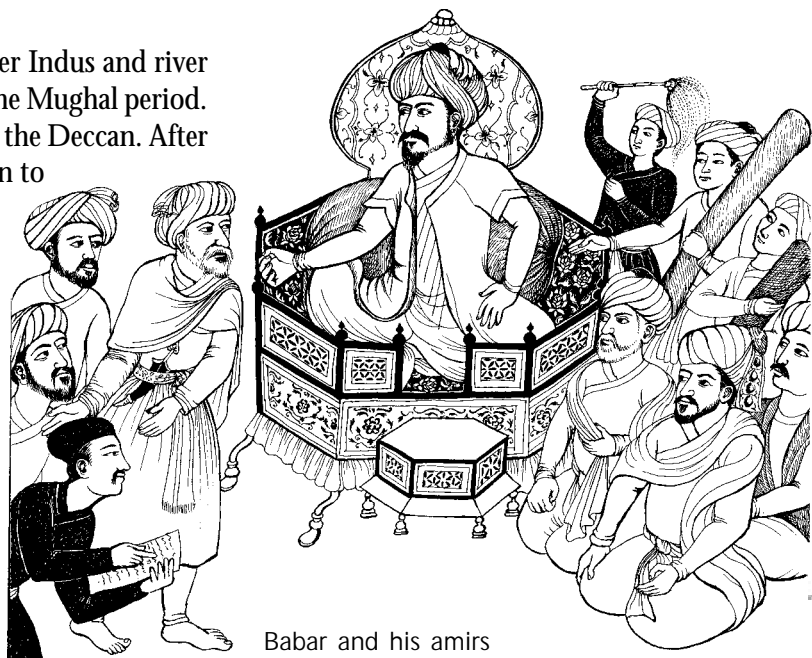
the help of their cannons and guns, Babar's army dealt a crushing defeat to the Delhi Sultan.

After taking a lot of riches from the treasuries of the Indian kings, Babar's soldiers wanted to return to Afghanistan. But Babar wanted to stay on and

establish his rule in Hindustan. The area between river Indus and river Narmada was called Hindustan in the Sultanate and the Mughal period. The territories South of the Narmada river were called the Deccan. After much persuasion Babur was finally able to get his men to stay on to conquer and rule Hindustan.

Babar fought many battles against powerful Afghan chiefs and Rajput kings. But in 1530, only four years after the battle of Panipat, Babar died.

His son, Humayun, became the emperor. He continued the efforts of his father, but he had to face serious challenges. In 1540 another Afghan sultan, Sher Shah Suri, defeated him and drove him out of Hindustan. However, in 1555 Humayun returned and began to re-establish his empire. But within a year he suddenly died in an accident. His 13 year old son, Akbar (Akbar), became the emperor.



Babar and his amirs

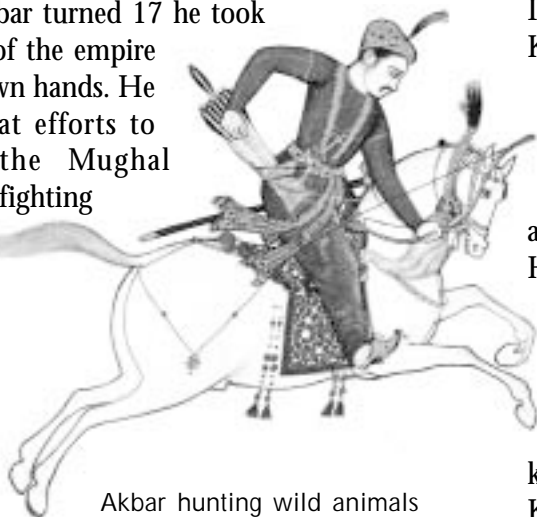
Emperor Akbar and his Amirs

Akbar Becomes the Emperor

In 1556 Mughal rule had still not taken a firm hold in Hindustan. All around them other kings and sultans were trying to drive the Mughals away. It was at this critical time that Akbar became the emperor.

Since Akbar was very young, Amir Bairam Khan acted as the regent, running the administration on behalf of the ruler. (In those times, high officials were called amirs.) Bairam Khan also arranged to have Akbar educated in the duties of an emperor.

When Akbar turned 17 he took the reins of the empire into his own hands. He made great efforts to expand the Mughal empire by fighting other kings, and he was very successful.



Akbar hunting wild animals

The Conquest of Malwa and Garha Katanga (गर्हा कटांगा)

In those days there were two major kingdoms in the area that we now call Madhya Pradesh. One was the kingdom of the Sultan of Malwa, Baaz Bahadur, with its capital at Mandu. Mandu is near the city of Indore. The other kingdom was Garha Katanga. Its capital was Chauragarh, which was near what is now Jabalpur. Garha Katanga was under Gond rulers, and during Akbar's time it was ruled by Rani Durgavati.

In 1561 Akbar sent his foster brother, Aadham Khan, to capture Malwa. Aadham Khan defeated Baaz Bahadur, the Sultan of Malwa. Though Baaz Bahadur fled Mandu, he kept trying to win back his kingdom for many years. In the end, however, he was unsuccessful and had to accept a position in the service of the Mughals. He was made a Mughal official.

Aadham Khan acquired many valuable treasures from Malwa. But he did not hand over all these spoils to Akbar. Instead, he tried to keep as much as possible for himself. When Akbar came to know of this he was furious. He forced Aadham Khan to part with what he had withheld.

Aadham Khan was not the only official to try to cheat the emperor. At around the same time another amir, Aasaf Khan, attacked the kingdom of Garha Katanga and defeated Rani Durgavati. Though wounded in battle, the queen fought with great valour. But upon seeing her army losing, she killed herself.

Aasaf Khan looted diamonds, other gems, priceless objects of gold and silver and many other things from Garha Katanga. But out of these vast treasures he sent only 200 elephants to Akbar. Once again

Akbar took harsh steps against the disloyalty and dishonesty of an amir. He forced Aasaf Khan to yield the entire treasure.

Akbar realised that such actions by his amirs might some day become a big problem for him. He did not want to give them free rein. He thought that if he allowed the amirs to do as they pleased he would not be able to make the Mughal empire as strong as he wanted it to be.

Which kingdoms did Akbar's amirs conquer?

What did these amirs do that made Akbar angry?

Conflicts between Akbar and the Turani Amirs

When Akbar became the emperor in 1556 he had 51 high officials, or amirs, in his court. These amirs were very wealthy. Akbar had divided responsibility for different parts of his empire among them. Each amir kept an army with him, which had to be presented before the emperor whenever it was ordered.

In return for all this the emperor granted each amir several villages and towns. This was called their **jagir**. The amirs kept the revenue that was collected from the villages and towns of their jagirs. The revenue was for their own use as well as for running the administration of the jagirs.



Akbar tried to run his kingdom with the support of the amirs. But he was not able to get their full backing. Let's find out why.....

Among Akbar's amirs, some were from Iran and were known as Irani amirs. But the majority of the amirs had come from an area known as Turan, which is in Turkestan. The ancestors of the Mughal emperors had also come from Turan. Many Turani amirs were in fact related to Akbar.

For this reason the Turani amirs considered themselves to be equals of Akbar and had no desire to be under his control. They wanted the freedom to administer their jagirs as they pleased. In fact they even wanted to be able to tell the emperor what to do.

But Akbar did not approve of this at all. He did not want anyone else in the empire to be equal to the emperor. He wanted everyone to be under his control. He wanted to be the one to decide who would become an amir and he wanted to make all the appointments to both high and low posts. He wanted all the amirs to follow his rules and to carry out his orders without any questions.

In the above section, underline the four sentences that you think are the most important.

The Turani amirs could not tolerate these policies of Akbar. From 1562 to 1567 many Turani amirs rebelled against Akbar and they ordered their armies to attack his.

What was Akbar to do?

Akbar found a solution to the problem. He promoted the interests of the Irani amirs by encouraging them and giving them new positions. The Irani amirs were happy with this and so they supported Akbar wholeheartedly. With their help Akbar was able to suppress the revolts of the Turani amirs.

Complete the following sentences:

The Turani amirs revolted because.....

To suppress these revolts, Akbar.....

Akbar Attempts to Recruit Indian Muslims (Sheikhzadas) as Amirs

A major obstacle in strengthening the empire was that the amirs looked upon themselves as equal to the emperor and did not want to be under his control.

In addition to this, Akbar faced another problem that had slowly become very serious. He himself had come from Kabul, and his amirs were from Iran and Turan. Those who had come from outside had difficulty establishing a strong rule in new places because the powerful local people would oppose them. Akbar realised that so long as the powerful Hindustanis did not accept his authority, Mughal rule would never be secure.

In those days two kinds of people were very powerful in Hindustan: Rajput kings, and Muslim families who had been staying in India for centuries and had acquired land and wealth. These Muslims were known as Sheikhzadas.

Akbar wanted both of these kinds of powerful Hindustani families to be on his side. To win them over he gave many Sheikhzadas positions in his court and made them his amirs. He also showed great respect towards their religious practices.



A Sheikhzada



Akbar offering respects at the dargah of the Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer.

Identify Akbar in the above picture. Who do you think the other people are?

What do you think Akbar might be thinking?

What do you think the others might be thinking about Akbar?

Attempts to Make the Rajputs Amirs

As for the Rajputs, Akbar found that they had no great desire to be his amirs. What they wanted was to remain free and rule their own kingdoms.

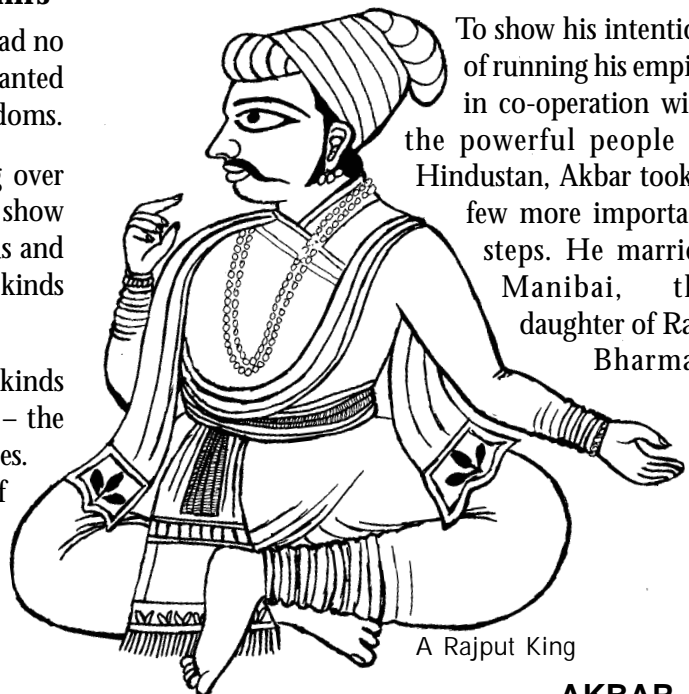
Akbar thought that if he wanted to bring over Rajput kings to his court he would have to show that he did not discriminate against Hindus and that he really wanted to carry all the different kinds of people of Hindustan along with him.

In those days Hindus had to pay two special kinds of taxes that Muslims did not have to pay – the jeziya tax and a tax on pilgrimages to holy places. Only those Hindus who were employees of the king or who were orphans did not have to pay the jeziya. In 1562 Akbar abolished the pilgrimage tax and in 1564 he stopped collecting jeziya from Hindus.

Some Rajput kings were swayed by these acts and came into the service of Akbar. One of them was Raja Bharmal. He was the king of Amer, which is a place near Jaipur. Akbar made Raja Bharmal his amir. (Later on Bharmal's son Bhagwandas and grandson Mansingh were also made amirs of the Mughal empire.)

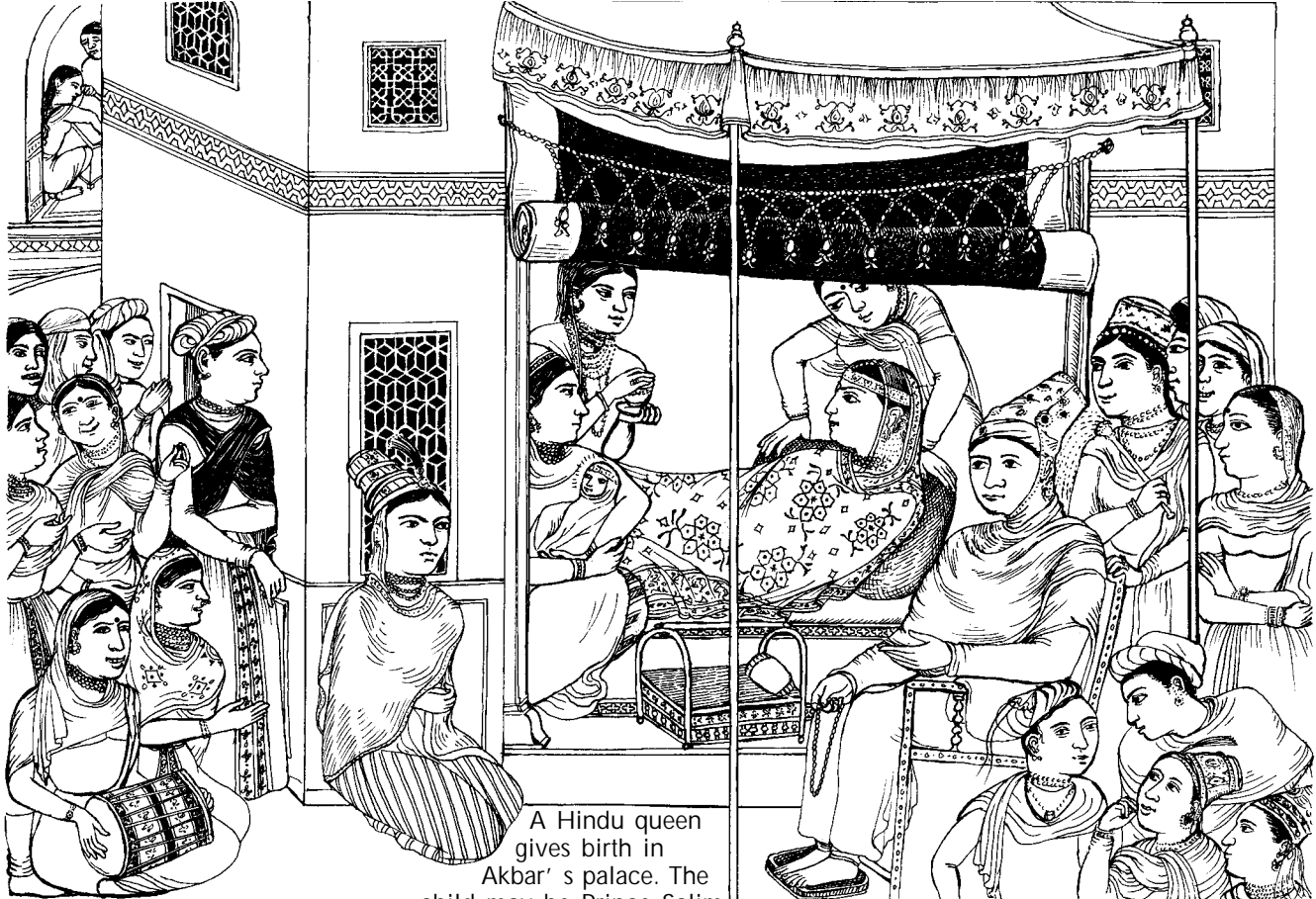
In return for Bharmal's support, Akbar granted him many concessions. He returned the kingdom of Amer to Bharmal and declared that Amer would never be taken away from him or his descendants.

Akbar made a proposal to the Rajput kings: if they agreed to serve under him, he would restore their kingdoms to them. They would be made amirs of the Mughal Empire. They would also be sent to conquer distant lands and to rule them on behalf of the Mughal emperor. In return for all this they would be given jagirs in other parts of the empire as well. Akbar hoped that the Rajput kings would find these offers so attractive that they would stop opposing him, and they might even agree to serve under him.



To show his intention of running his empire in co-operation with the powerful people of Hindustan, Akbar took a few more important steps. He married Manibai, the daughter of Raja Bharmal.

A Rajput King



A Hindu queen gives birth in Akbar's palace. The child may be Prince Salim who became Emperor Jahangir.

After the wedding, he allowed her to continue openly practicing Hinduism. Usually the bride has to accept the traditions of her husband's family. Before Akbar's time, whenever a Hindu bride married a sultan, she was not given the freedom to follow her original religion. But Akbar was more willing to accept the religious freedom of his Hindu queens. In addition to Manibai, Akbar married several other Rajput women.

What steps did Akbar take to remove religious discrimination against the Hindus?

What special benefits did Akbar offer Rajput kings? Make a list.

In your view, why did Akbar make these efforts?

Now let's see how successful Akbar's efforts were.

Akbar Wages War against the Rajputs

Most of the Rajput kings were not attracted by Akbar's offers. They wanted to rule as independent kings rather than to accept Mughal suzerainty (overlordship). They struggled till the end to retain their independence. They did see certain advantages in becoming Mughal amirs, but these could not outweigh the advantages of ruling on their own.

Seeing this attitude of the Rajput kings, Akbar decided to resort to the use of arms to make them bend to his will. He decided to defeat the major Rajput kings in battle, one by one.

In 1568 Akbar laid siege to Chittorgarh, which was the strong fort and famous capital of Mewar, and he was victorious. Though defeated in battle, the king of Mewar, Udaysingh, did not want to bow down before the Mughals. He escaped and started preparing to regain his kingdom.

After the victory over Chittorgarh, the Mughals also conquered and annexed the Rajput kingdoms of Jodhpur and Ranthambhor.

Look at this picture of the attack on the Ranthambhor fort. It looks as if three cannons were not enough and a fourth was urgently needed on the hilltop. Describe how the cannon is being brought up the hill.



This picture shows the king of Ranthambhor, Raja Sujan Singh, accepting the suzerainty of Akbar.

At last the Rajput kings realised that they would not be able to win against the Mughals. On the other hand Akbar was still offering them many special privileges in return for being part of his empire. Thus, many Rajput kings started coming into the service of the Mughals, and became Mughal amirs.

Although these Rajputs had retained their kingdoms and they were now safe from Mughal attacks, in two respects they were not free. One, they could not strengthen their forts or increase their armies without permission from the Mughal emperor. Two, they could not attack or make pacts with other kingdoms.

But despite these restrictions, their kingdoms were safe and secure, with the might of the Mughals behind them. The Rajput kings also had the opportunity to rise to high positions in Mughal service.



Rana Pratap

Rana Pratap, the son of Rana Uday Singh of Mewar also refused to accept the overlordship of Akbar. He fought valiantly in many battles such as the one in Haldighati. At Haldighati the Mughal forces were led by the Rajput prince Man Singh.

However Rana Pratap was ultimately defeated and lost control of most of his kingdom. Yet he continued to fight the Mughals from the jungles of Mewar. It was his son who finally accepted the overlordship of Akbar's son Jahangir, though he refused to become a Mughal official.

Name some Rajput kingdoms that came under the suzerainty of the Mughal empire.

How did Akbar treat the Rajput kings whom he defeated in battle?

Discontent among the Turani and Irani Amirs

Over a period of time several Sheikhzadas and Rajputs became Akbar's amirs. In addition to Rajputs, other Hindus also joined his court. For instance, Todarmal (whom Akbar granted the title of Raja) and Birbal were famous Hindu courtiers. You must have heard stories about them.

As more and more Hindustanis became amirs, a feeling of discontent grew among the Irani and Turani amirs. In the beginning most of the amirs in Akbar's court had been Irani and Turani. Whatever the emperor wanted to do he could do only with their support. But now the situation had changed. Even if the Irani and Turani amirs opposed him, the emperor could still do what he wished – for now he had the support of the Hindustani amirs. For this reason, dissatisfaction was increasing among the Irani and Turani amirs. They felt that because of the Rajputs their power was being taken away from them and they were no longer as important as they used to be.

Akbar Re-imposes the Jeziya in 1575

Akbar now began to look for ways to appease the Irani and Turani amirs. But he did not want to weaken the position of the Rajputs. Nor did he want to restore the strength of the Irani and Turani amirs to its earlier level. He felt that if he took some steps against Hindus it would pacify the Irani and Turani amirs. So beginning in 1575 he started speaking out against Hindus. He imposed the jeziya on them again. He also ordered some of his officers to stop Hindus from worshipping idols.

Discuss with each other the changes in Akbar's religious policies.



This dagger was made during the times of Emperor Akbar, and is now on display in a museum in England.

The 1580 Revolt of the Irani and Turani Amirs

Akbar had taken steps against the Hindus, but all this had no effect on the Irani and Turani amirs. In 1580 they rebelled against him with great strength. The revolt broke out on two sides – in Kabul as well as in Bengal.

In your opinion, what could Akbar have done to satisfy the Irani and Turani amirs?

This time it was with the help of the Hindustani amirs that Akbar suppressed the revolt of the Irani and Turani amirs. Raja Mansingh and Bhagwandas subdued the revolt in Kabul, while Todarmal crushed the rebel Irani and Turani amirs in Bengal. After this, Akbar faced no other challenge to his power.

In 1575 Akbar re-imposed the jeziya. Even so, the Rajput amirs continued to give him their support. Why were they not unhappy with Akbar?

Thus, making Rajputs and Sheikhzadas amirs along with Iranis and Turanis proved to be of great benefit to the Mughal Empire. When the Irani and Turani amirs rebelled against Akbar, he put down the revolt with the help of Rajputs and Hindustani Muslims.

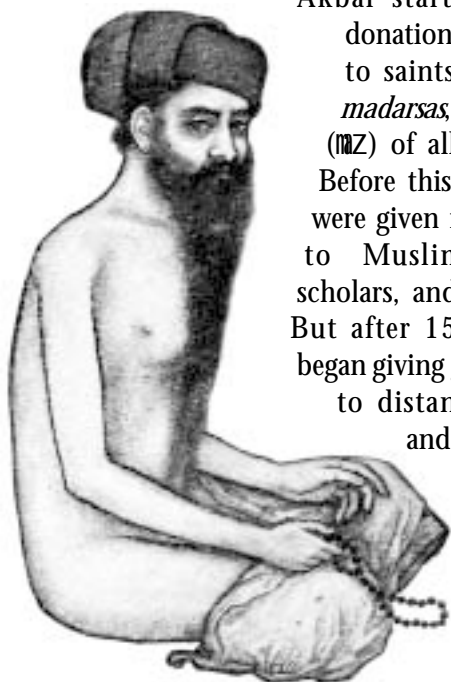
Why do you think Akbar did not completely remove the Iranis and Turanis from his court?

The Sulah Kul Policy after the 1580 Revolt

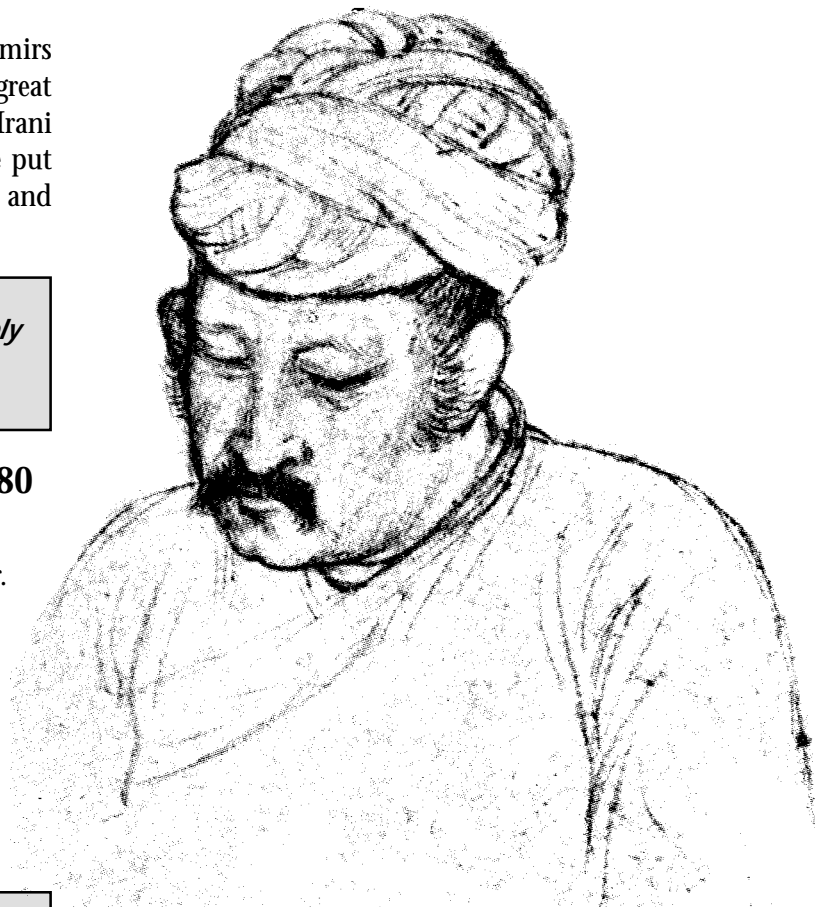
The 1580 revolt left a deep impact on Akbar. He felt that his order to re-impose the *jeziya* had failed to please the Irani and Turani amirs and had needlessly hurt the Hindus.

Once more there was a great change in Akbar's religious policy. In 1580 itself he again abolished the *jeziya*.

Why did Akbar re-impose the jeziya in 1575? And why did he remove it in 1580?



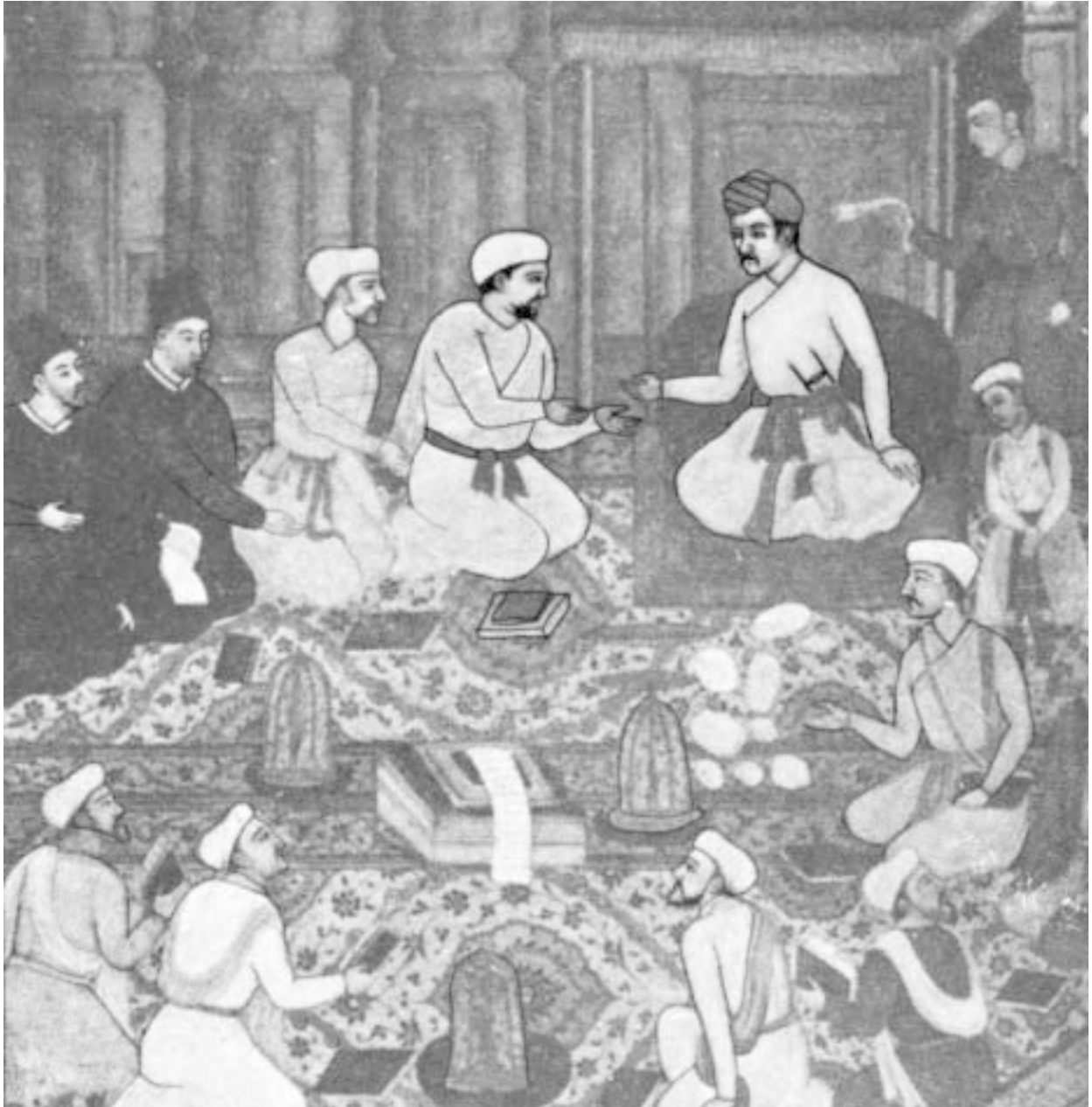
Akbar started giving donations and alms to saints, temples, *madarsas*, and *maths* (māṭh) of all religions. Before this donations were given mostly just to Muslim saints, scholars, and mosques. But after 1580 Akbar began giving grants even to distant temples and *maths*.



Akbar was keenly interested in other religions. It is said that at times he would sink into religious thoughts for whole nights. He would hold discussions with whichever religious person came his way.

He got an *Ibadat Khanah* (a prayer room) made in the mosque near his palace. There he held discussions with important scholars of Islam, or maulvis. He told the maulvis, "I have but one objective – to find the truth – to bring forth the true principles of religion."

Akbar found that the maulvis fought too much among themselves and kept hurling accusations at each other. He soon grew tired of this. In 1580 he began inviting saints and scholars of other religions to the *Ibadat Khana*. Hindu pundits, Sufi saints, Jain munis of Gujarat, Parsi scholars, and Christian padres – on Akbar's invitation all came there to take part in discussions. The Christian padres were those who used to come with traders from Portugal.



Akbar holding a discussion in his Ibadat Khanah

All these discussions had a great effect on Akbar's thinking. The thoughts and opinions of Abul Fazl, a minister in his court, also influenced him a lot. Abu al Fazl wrote a book on Akbar's rule called *Akbar Nama*, and from this we get to know a lot about those times.

A new kind of thought and understanding of religion emerged in Akbar's mind. Badayuni, a historian of the time, wrote, "As a result of these discussions a rock-like conviction grew in the emperor's mind, that in all religions there are good people. If true knowledge can be attained in all religions, then it is not correct to say that there is truth in only one religion and that other religions are false."

Inspired by such thoughts, Akbar adopted a new policy – Sulah Kul. This was a policy of **amity** between all – a total peace between all religions and communities.

Following this policy, Akbar banned the slaughter of cows. In his own life he started observing some of the rituals of Hindus, Parsis, and others. He had the main religious books or scriptures of different religions translated into Persian (the official language). The Gita, Mahabharata, Atharvaveda, Bible, Panchtantra, Singhasan Battisi, as well as many science books, were translated into Persian so that Persian-speaking Muslims could read and understand them.

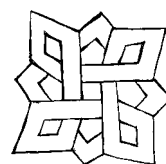


Akbar had his artists paint this scene from the Mahabharat showing Krishna' s combat with Indra. Who can you recognise in this painting?

At the same time, Akbar dropped many aspects of Islam that he felt were not correct.

Akbar's policy of Sulah Kul was important because the Mughal empire contained people of many religions. His amirs followed different religions and they all had to work together to administer the empire. There were lakhs of Muslims in his realm, but most of the minor officials were Hindus. The great majority of the peasants, craftsmen, and zamindars were Hindus. Members of the trading classes followed the Hindu, Jain, or Parsi religions.

In such a vast empire it was necessary to be accepted and have support from all these kinds of people. Only then could the administration of the state run smoothly and peacefully. With the policy of Sulah Kul, the minds of all kinds of people could be inclined in favour of the emperor. This policy was also continued by the Mughal emperors who came after Akbar.

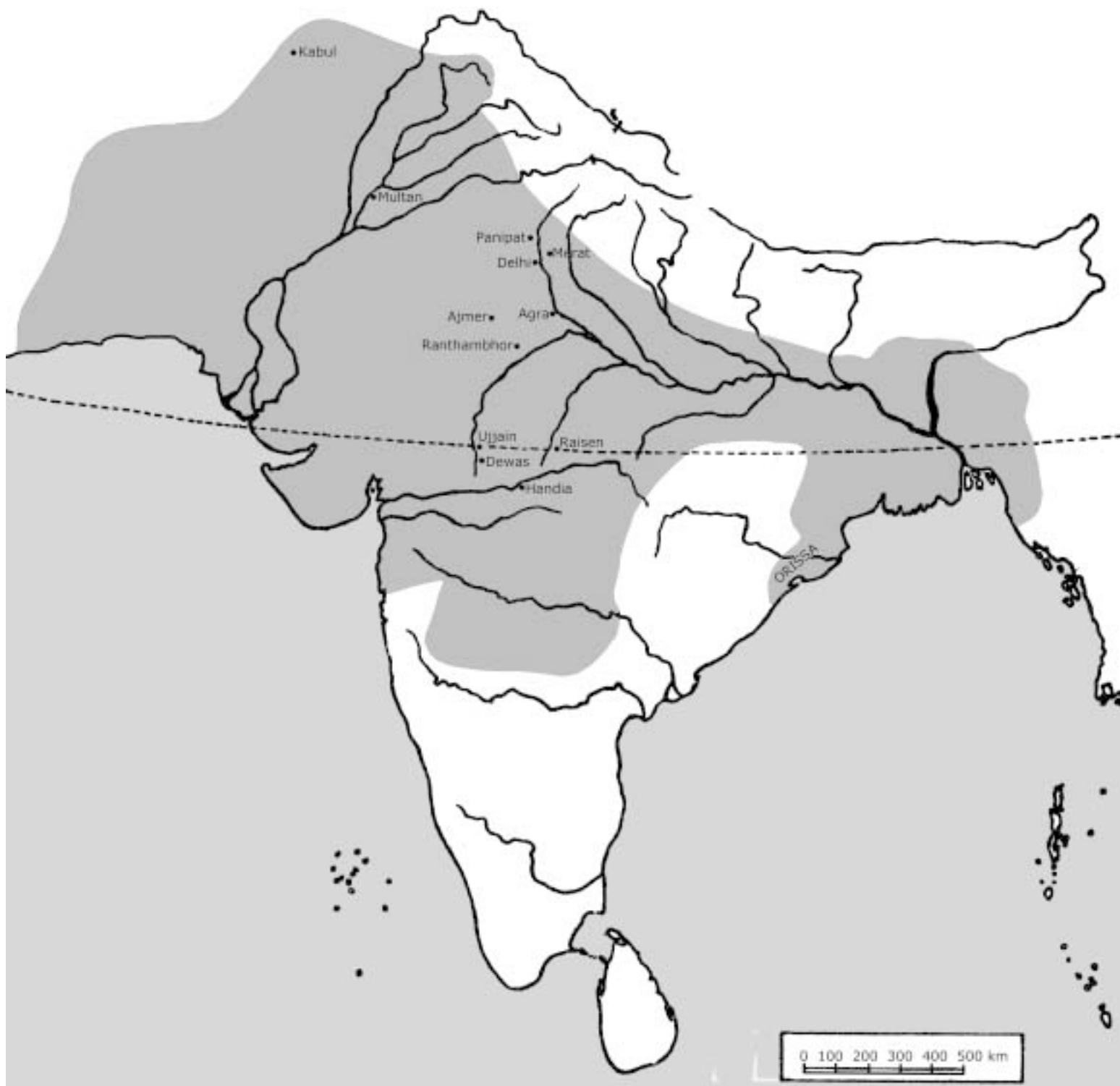


Exercises

- 1 *When Akbar first became the emperor who were his high officials (amirs)? Who became his amirs during his reign?*
- 2 *Which of the following did the Turani amirs want and which did Akbar want?*
 - (a) *That the amirs should have the same rights as the emperor.*
 - (b) *That the amirs should run their jagirs in accordance with the wishes of the emperor.*
 - (c) *That the emperor should act according to the wishes of the amirs.*
 - (d) *That all power should remain with the emperor.*
- 3 *What concessions did Akbar offer the Rajput kings in order to get them to be his amirs?*
- 4 *Mark true or false:*
 - (a) *Impressed by Akbar's concessions, the Rajputs immediately agreed to be his amirs.*
 - (b) *Despite Akbar's concessions, most of the Rajput kings were not ready to be his amirs, because they wanted to be free and rule their own kingdoms.*
- 5 *Why did the Irani and Turani amirs become unhappy when Rajputs and Indian Muslims became amirs? Explain in your own words.*
- 6 *Discuss each of the following:*
 - (a) *Why did Akbar abolish the jeziya in 1563?*
 - (b) *Why did Akbar re-impose the jeziya in 1575?*
 - (c) *Why did Akbar abolish the jeziya once again in 1580?*
- 7 *What conclusions did Akbar draw from religious discussions?*
- 8 *What steps did Akbar take under the policy of Sulah Kul? Why were these steps necessary for the empire?*

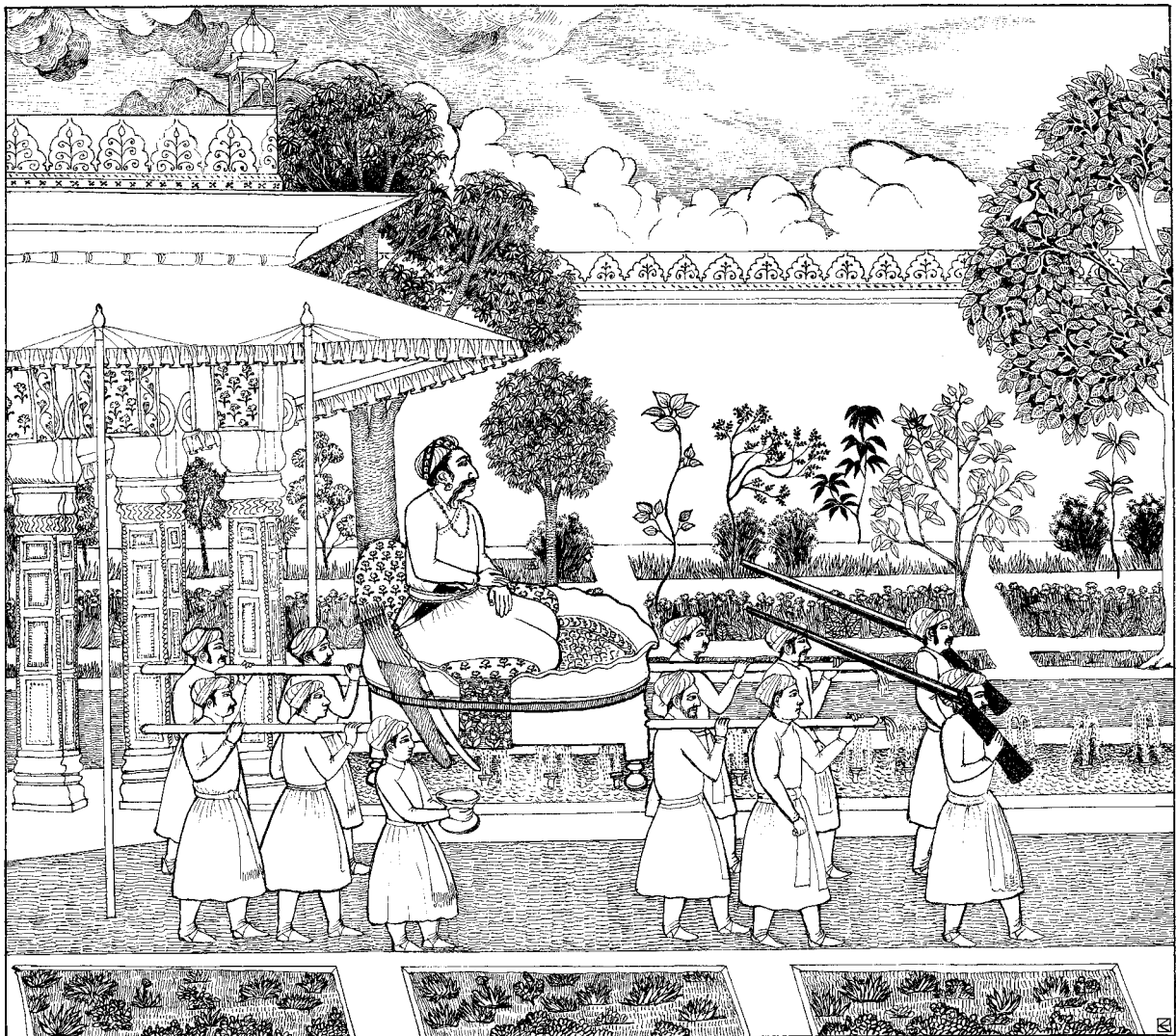
The Mughal Empire in 1605

(shaded dark grey)





The Amirs of the Mughal Empire



Here is an amir of the Mughal empire. This is how an amir sometimes travelled from place to place.

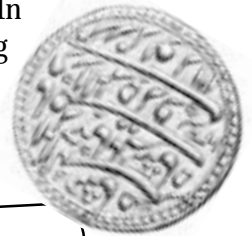
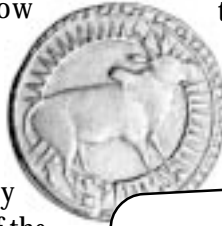
Mansabdars and Amirs

Administering a kingdom or a state requires officials and their staff. During the Mughal period the officials who looked after the administration of the empire were known as *mansabdars* (mansabadar). *Mansabdar* means holder of a rank – the emperor assigned a rank to each of his officials. The Mughal empire had thousands of high and low *mansabdars*. They executed the orders of the emperor. They maintained accounts of tax collected. If anyone rebelled against the authority of the emperor, it was the *mansabdars* who suppressed the revolt. They protected the empire and extended the rule of the Mughals to new areas. Of the thousands of mansabdars, around 500 or so were high officials or nobles called amirs.

Remember:
All Mughal officials who received a salary from the emperor were called **mansabdars**. A few very senior mansabdars were called **amirs** and they were the nobles of the Mughal empire.

In those days, no official in any kingdom in the world received as high a salary as the Mughal amirs or senior mansabdars. How else could they have lived in such luxury and grandeur? The Mughal empire had nobles whose salaries ranged from Rs 8,000

per month to Rs 45,000 per month. In those days you could buy 40 kg of wheat for a rupee. So just imagine how rich those nobles were!



Some coins from those times

How did a person become an official during Mughal rule? Let's try and find out. We will also compare Mughal officials with officers in the administrative service today, to see what similarities and differences there are between them.

Look carefully at the picture on the previous page. As you look at it, what thoughts come to your mind regarding the amirs of the Mughal empire? Write these thoughts down in your own words.

The Life of Amir Baqar Khan

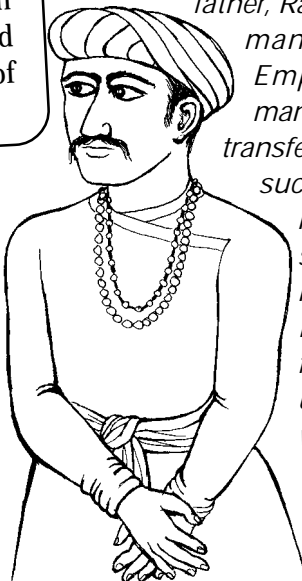
Let's read about the life of an amir of the Mughal empire. His name was Baqar Khan (baqr Khan). He was a noble during the reign of Emperor Jahangir (jahangir), who had become the emperor after the death of Akbar in 1605.

Do you know how a person gets a government job today? Discuss in your class.

How do you think Baqar Khan got a government job?

The Appointment of a Mansabdar

Baqar Khan's ancestors were Irani nobles. His father, Rahmat Khan (rahmat Khan), became a mansabdar during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Like other mansabdars, Rahmat Khan was also transferred from place to place. After one such transfer, Rahmat Khan found himself posted at Handia. His two sons, Baqar Khan and Asaf Khan, had grown up by then. Rahmat Khan was worried about their future. "Will my sons find jobs under the emperor?" he wondered.



Rahmat Khan's father had also been in the service of the Mughal emperor. But this did not mean that his sons would automatically become mansabdars. It depended on the wish of the emperor. It was the emperor who decided who should be appointed a mansabdar.

One day, Rahmat Khan was busy preparing for a trip to Ujjain. He was supervising the packing of some jewels, gold coins and expensive clothes with zari work in a box when his son Baqar Khan entered the room.

"Abbajaan, why are you taking all these things to Ujjain?" asked Baqar Khan.

Rahmat Khan replied, "Son, I'm going to meet Abdullah Khan, the subedar of Malwa, at Ujjain. I want him to recommend you and your brother to Emperor Jahangir for a job in the administration. Of course, he won't make the

recommendation on his own. I will have to give him something - a present. That's why I'm taking these valuable gifts with me."

In those days, the Mughal empire was divided into 12 subas or provinces. Malwa was one of the subas and Ujjain was its capital. The highest official in the suba was known as the subedar.

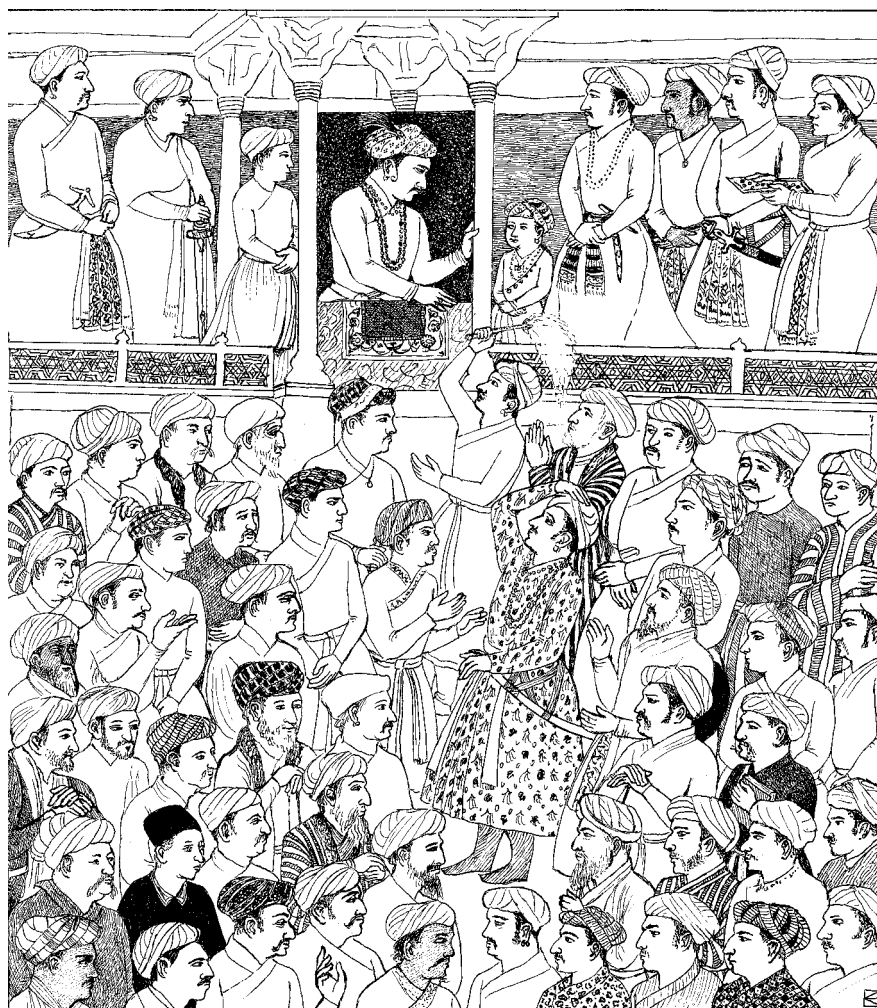
The emperor appointed new mansabdars on the recommendations of his senior officials. That was why Baqar Khan's father set out to meet subedar Abdullah Khan.

The subedar agreed to recommend the case of Baqar Khan, the elder son. He wrote a letter to the emperor in which he praised Baqar Khan, saying he was a good swordsman. He also wrote that Baqar Khan's father, Rahmat Khan, was a loyal mansabdar. He concluded the letter by saying it would be fitting to make Baqar Khan a junior mansabdar.

The subedar sent the letter to Agra through a qasida (runners who conveyed letters). Agra was the capital of the Mughal empire and the emperor lived there.

The letter reached the mir bakshi in Agra. The mir bakshi (mir bakhsh) was the official who looked after the appointments of mansabdars. The following day, when Emperor Jahangir presided over his court, the mir bakshi read out the letter from the Malwa subedar.

Emperor Jahangir gave his orders to the mir bakshi. "Prepare a farman to make Baqar Khan a mansabdar. Give Baqar Khan the responsibility of



The darbar of Emperor Jahangir. No one could sit down in front of the emperor. Can you see a Portuguese padre standing amongst the others?

raising a contingent of 100 cavalrymen and 200 horses. Decide what his first job should be and let me know."

After being briefed by the mir bakshi, the emperor decided to make Baqar Khan the kotwal (*kotwala*) of Raisen.

A few days later, a royal farman (*farman* - which today we call a government order) was issued in which the details of Baqar Khan's appointment were spelt out. Baqar Khan's salary was fixed at Rs 5,000 per month. In addition, he was to be paid a sum of Rs 1,500 per month to maintain a contingent of 100 cavalrymen and 200 horses.

Baqar Khan was overjoyed when he received the farman in Handia. At last he too would become a mansabdar!

It was Baqar Khan's good fortune that he was appointed a mansabdar. Now let's find out what happened after his appointment.

The Mansabdar's Guarantor

A few days after receiving the farman, Baqar Khan went to meet the subedar of Malwa. He had been appointed as the kotwal of Raisen, which came under the Malwa suba.

Subedar Abdullah Khan told him, "You are now a junior mansabdar. If you work hard you can become a senior mansabdar like your father."

The subedar asked Baqar Khan, "Who is your guarantor (*jamnatdar*)?" Baqar Khan replied, "Seth Hukumchand is my father's guarantor. He knows me well. I'm sure he'll stand guarantee for me too."

In those days, a mansabdar had to get a prominent person to stand guarantee for him before he could get a salary. If the mansabdar mishandled or misappropriated money, or did not do his work properly, the emperor could ask the guarantor to pay up, thus compensating the state for any loss.

Baqar Khan got Ujjain's Seth Hukumchand to stand guarantee for him.

Maintaining a Cavalry Contingent

In this way Baqar Khan fulfilled one condition for receiving his salary. A second condition still remained - he had to organise a force of 100 cavalrymen (horse riders) for the emperor.

In those days, all mansabdars, whether big or small, had to maintain a troop of cavalry.

Comparing Then and Now

This was how officials were appointed during the time of the Mughals. How different it is from the way officials are appointed today! These days, when the government wishes to appoint people to various posts, it first places an advertisement in the papers. The advertisement gives the details of the posts vacant in various departments. It shows how many posts are available, the qualifications needed for each post, etc. Any person can submit an application for the posts if he or she meets the minimum

requirements. All the candidates then appear for an examination and face interviews. Those who pass the examination and interview are appointed to the job. These are the procedures of appointment in the government. If they are not followed, people can file a case in a court.

However, such a system did not exist in the time of the Mughals. There were no such application procedures laid out. Everything depended on the goodwill of the emperor. And if Baqar Khan did not get the job, he could not appeal to anyone.

An example of a modern advertisement

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Subject: Filling up the post of Scientist "E"/"F" on deputation/contract basis
Government of India has constituted Technology Development Board (TDB), a Statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology in the year 1996 to administer the Fund for Technology Development and Application.
TDB invites applications for the following posts of Scientists:
1. Scientist "F" in the pay scale of Rs. 16,400-450-20,000
2. Scientist "E" in the pay scale of Rs. 14,300-400-18,300
The job involves appraisal and processing of technology commercialisation project proposals, monitoring, steering till finalisation of the projects. The above posts are to be filled on deputation/contract basis for a period of 3 years.
Essential qualifications: Post Graduates in Science or Graduate in Engineering or Technology related subject.
Experience: Three years in responsible position on technology financing/technology commercialisation.
Eligibility: Scientists working in immediate lower grade shall be considered for the next higher grade.
For the post of Scientist "F": 5 years regular service in the grade of Scientist "E" (Rs. 14,300-400-18,300)
For the post of Scientist "E": 5 years regular service in the grade of Scientist "D" (Rs. 12,000-375-16,500)
Scientists and Technologists holding analogous posts in Central Govt./State Govt./Autonomous bodies/industry are also eligible.
Age: Not exceeding 56 years as on 19th November, 2002.
The above posts carry usual allowances as applicable to the Central Government employees and also other benefits like Leave Travel Concession, Medical facilities, etc. The employees of the Board are not covered under the general pool of Government accommodation.
FORMAT OF THE APPLICATION
(1) Name in full (in Capital Letters). (2) Father's/Huband's Name. (3) Address for Communication. (4) Permanent Address. (5) Date of Birth (in Christian Era). (6) Academic Qualifications. (7) Employment details in chronological order including pay drawn. (8) Experience(s). (9) Names and Addresses of two Referees (10) Self Appraisal and (11) Signature of the Applicant with date.
Interested candidates may send their applications through proper channel to:
The Secretary,
Technology Development Board,
Department of Science and Technology,
Technology Bhawan,
New Mehrauli Road, New Delhi-110016.
Last date for receipt of applications: 19th November, 2002
damp 1347/2/2002
Technology Development Board.

Some kept 10 soldiers, some 100 and some even 5,000 soldiers. Whenever the emperor needed soldiers, he would send an order to his mansabdars.

The emperor also kept a separate army. But he made each mansabdar maintain some troops for him. The mansabdars paid the salaries of these soldiers and the expenses for the upkeep of horses from the money the emperor gave them.

In this way, the responsibility of maintaining a huge army was divided among all the mansabdars. The mansabdars could also use their soldiers for other administrative responsibilities.

Baqar Khan's father maintained a contingent of 1000 men and 2000 horses in Handia. Baqar Khan purchased 200 horses with the help of his father's horse trader. He then told his father's cavalymen that he needed soldiers. They recruited men from their villages. Thus, Baqar Khan recruited a contingent of 100 young men. Since he had not yet begun to receive a salary, he took a loan from Seth Hukumchand to meet all the expenses.

Complete the following sentences:

During the Mughal period, all officials were appointed by _____.

The emperor appointed new officials based on the _____ of his senior amirs.

The mansabdar received money for his salary besides money for _____

Baqar Khan Takes Charge of his Kotwali

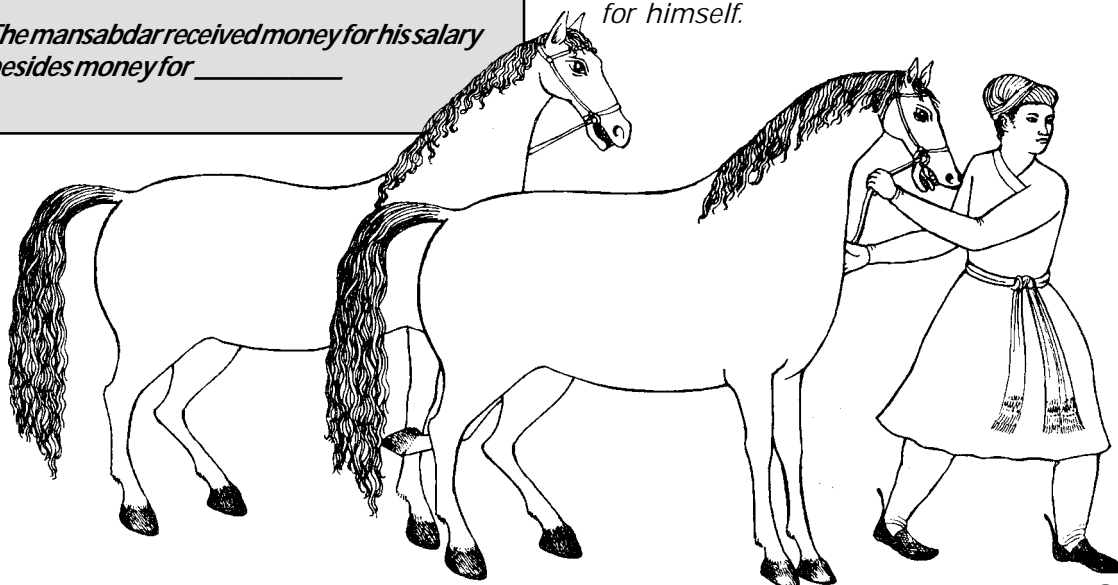
Once his cavalry contingent was ready, Baqar Khan left Handia for Raisen. He carried the royal farman of his appointment with him. On reaching Raisen he went to the kotwali and took up his duties. His work included catching thieves and dacoits, maintaining peace and order and keeping an eye on the happenings in town.

Several months passed. Baqar Khan was running out of money. This was the money he had borrowed from Seth Hukumchand. The Seth was demanding his money back. But Baqar Khan had still not received his salary.

Baqar Khan sent one of his men to Agra. The man made the rounds of the imperial **diwan's** office. The imperial diwan was the mansabdar who arranged payments of salaries. The imperial diwan kept the accounts of the income and expenditure of the entire Mughal empire.

Baqar Khan Gets a Jagir

During the time of the Mughals, there were two ways in which officials were paid. Some mansabdars were paid in cash. But the majority were given jagirs. A jagir meant the mansabdar had the right to collect the emperor's taxes from the people of a certain area and keep the money for himself.



For instance Baqar Khan's salary was Rs 5,000 per month. He was paid an additional Rs 1,500 for his cavalry.

Can you calculate the monthly amount provided to Baqar Khan for keeping one soldier and two horses?

In a year, Baqar Khan should have received a total of Rs 78,000 for himself and his cavalry. To arrange for this Rs 78,000, the imperial diwan picked out 40 villages in the Malwa suba from which a total land tax of Rs 78,000 was due. These 40 villages were near Dewas. The diwan selected these 40 villages as Baqar Khan's jagir.

On the imperial diwan's recommendation, Emperor Jahangir issued a farman in which he ordered that Baqar Khan may collect the land tax from these 40 villages and retain it in lieu of his salary.

Those mansabdars who received salaries in the form of jagirs were known as jagirdars. In this way, Baqar Khan became a jagirdar and his salary was taken care of.

But consider one point. Did the emperor give all the villages and towns in his empire as jagirs? If he did, how could he pay for his own expenses? Actually, the emperor kept about 25 percent of the land tax for himself. He did not give villages and towns in some areas of the empire as jagir. The land tax of these areas was collected by his officers and turned over to him.

Did the jagirdars turn over a part of the land tax from their jagirs to the emperor? Explain.

Collecting Land Tax from the Jagir

Baqar Khan was posted in Raisen but the jagir allotted to him was in Dewas. He would have to go to Dewas to collect his salary.

Find how far Dewas is from Raisen using the map on page 16.

Baqar Khan got ready to go to Dewas once he got the farman for his jagir.

The Amil

First Baqar Khan had to solve one problem. How was he to collect land tax from the villages of Dewas? He could not go personally to every village to collect land tax. Baqar Khan looked for a reliable man who could be entrusted with the task of collecting land tax on his behalf.

In a few days he found the right man. His name was Banarsi Das and he was the son of a trader in Raisen. Baqar Khan appointed Banarsi Das as his amil (Amla) or agent.

He made an arrangement with Banarsi Das - in return for collecting the land tax on his behalf, Baqar Khan would pay him a certain amount of money. Baqar Khan also took Rs 2,000 from Banarsi Das as guarantee. This was to ensure that Banarsi Das did not fudge the accounts or make off with the land tax. If he did, Baqar Khan stood to lose a great deal of money. So he took this guarantee beforehand, which he would return only if Banarsi Das brought him the taxes.

After making all these arrangements, Baqar Khan and his amil Banarsi Das left for Dewas where the villages of his jagir were. They first met the diwan of Dewas. The diwan kept the accounts of land tax of all the villages of the area.



You remember that the imperial diwan maintained the accounts of the entire empire? Each smaller area also had its own diwan.

The diwan of Dewas provided Baqar Khan with the details of the 40 villages of his jagir. He also showed him the land tax accounts. He then advised Baqar Khan, "Collect only as much land tax as has been fixed by the emperor. I don't want to receive any complaint from the peasants. If complaints are received, I shall inform the emperor. He will then demote you and reduce your salary. Of course, if the peasants or zamindars of any village refuse to pay land tax, inform the fauzdar (Faujadar). He will send his soldiers to assist you."

After his discussions with the diwan and fauzdar, Baqar Khan and his amil went to the villages. They called the zamindars, patels and patwaris of the villages and showed them the royal farman.

Baqar Khan told them, "Banarsi Das is my amil. He will collect land tax from you on my behalf. Please give him all your assistance."

Having made the arrangements, Baqar Khan returned to Raisen. Banarsi Das collected his salary from the villages and brought it to him.

In the next chapter you will read how the *amil* collected land tax from the villages and how it was often not possible to collect the entire land tax. If the land tax could not be collected properly, the jagirdars would not be able to recover their full salaries for the year.

Inspection of the Cavalry

One day an order came from the mir bakshi in Agra. Baqar Khan was told to report at Agra within two months with his troops. The emperor was to inspect his contingent.

You have read that every mansabdar had to keep a specified number of mounted soldiers for the emperor. Baqar Khan had to maintain 100 cavalymen. The emperor wanted to make sure that his mansabdars were actually maintaining their cavalry. That's why he inspected their contingents once every one or two years.

The mansabdar's horses would be branded (permanently marked) during these inspections. In addition, a report carrying a description of each of his soldiers would be registered at Agra. Any mansabdar who failed to take his troops for inspection was punished. The punishment was usually a demotion.

Baqar Khan reached Agra with his army. The emperor himself inspected the army along with the mir bakshi. The horses were branded and descriptions of the cavalymen were recorded.



Transfers

All *mansabdars* in the Mughal empire were transferred every one or two years. Their jagirs, also kept changing. There was a very important reason for doing this. The Mughal emperors did not want any of their senior officials to get too strong or too well established in one place.

What would happen if a *mansabdar* remained in one place for many years? He would establish relations with powerful and prominent families of the area. With their help he could even rebel against the emperor. To prevent this from happening the *mansabdars* were constantly transferred and their jagirs were changed.

Baqar Khan was transferred many times. He went to Multan, Agra, Awadh and Bengal. He was also promoted, rising in rank. By 1627 he became the subedar of Orissa. He was, thus, a senior mansabdar or amir. His salary was Rs 30,000 per month. He had to maintain 5,000 cavalymen, for which he was paid another Rs 80,000 per month.

b) How did the Mughal emperors ensure the following duties of their officers

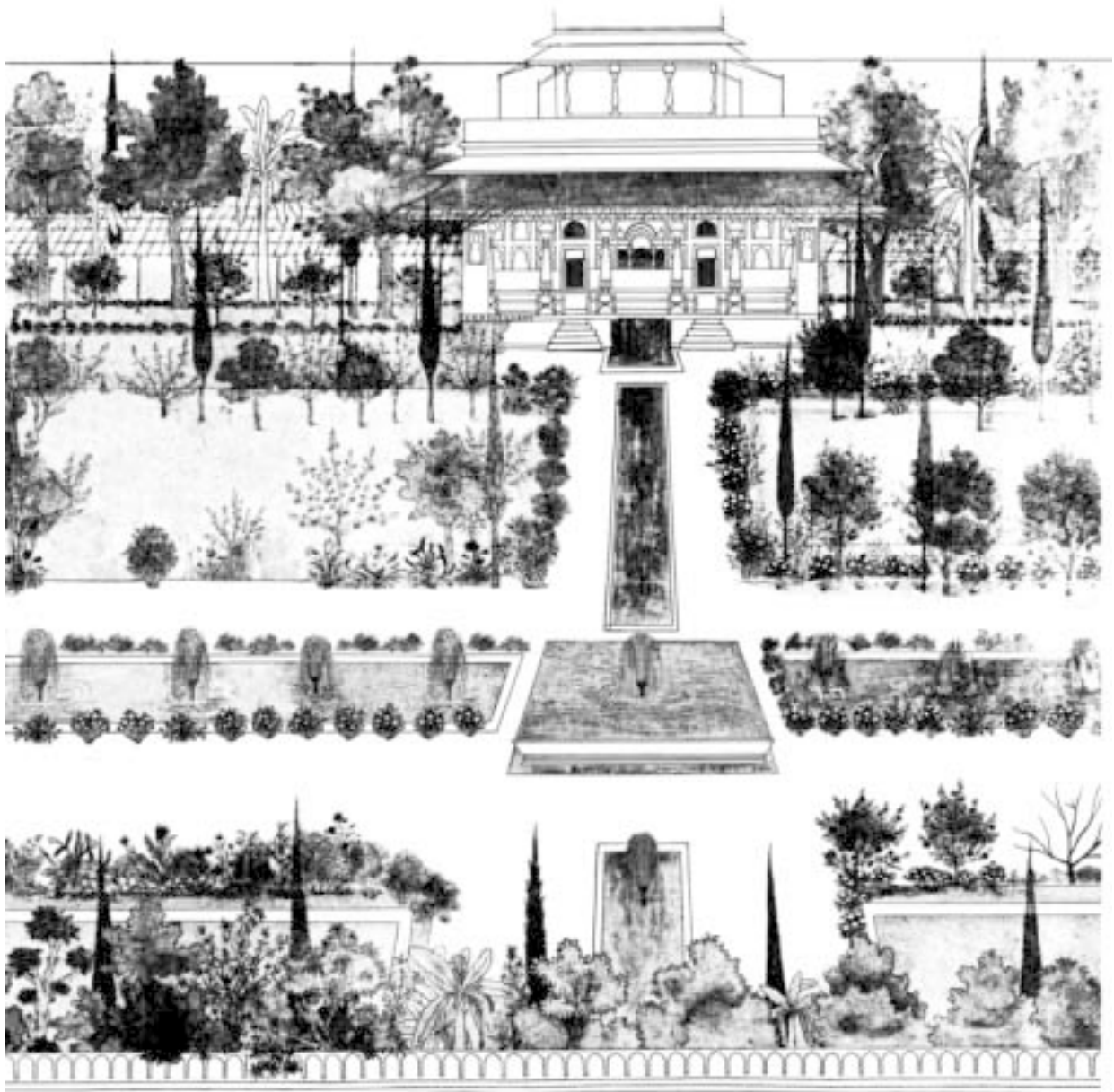
- **Responsibility for maintaining an army**

a) Compare the officers of today with those of Mughal times. Explain the similarities and differences between them with regard to:

- **Manner of appointment**
- **Definite salary**
- **Manner of obtaining salary**
- **Transfer**
- **Responsibility of maintaining troops**

• Collection of tax

Baqar Khan earned Rs 30,000 a month at a time when you could get 40 kg of wheat for a rupee. What did Baqar Khan do with so much money? Let's



take a peep into his home to see how he lived.

The Lifestyle of a Mughal Amir

Baqar Khan lived in a huge palace. It could not be seen from the road because it was surrounded by high walls. The outer wall had a door which was guarded by 20 to 30 sentries. Inside, there was a large formal garden at the centre of which stood his palace. Running through the middle of the garden was a marble channel in which cool water flowed. Beautiful fountains dotted the garden. There were paths on both sides of the channel and square lawns bordered by flower beds and rows of tall trees.

Baqar Khan's palace was made mostly of stone. It had many large rooms. The floors of the rooms were covered with expensive carpets. The walls had niches containing porcelain cups and jars from Iran and China. The walls were made of polished stone. Baqar Khan's own special room was made of marble. It's walls had a floral inlay of coloured precious stones.

The ceiling was plated with silver and gold. Some of the rooms were built below ground level to keep them cool during the hot summer months.

Baqar Khan built separate houses for each of his four wives. Each wife had a household of 40 to 50 slaves to serve her.

Baqar Khan and his wives were particularly fond of jewels like diamonds and pearls. Traders from far and wide would come to sell them jewels. They also liked beautiful and expensive clothes. Anything already worn



A marble screen

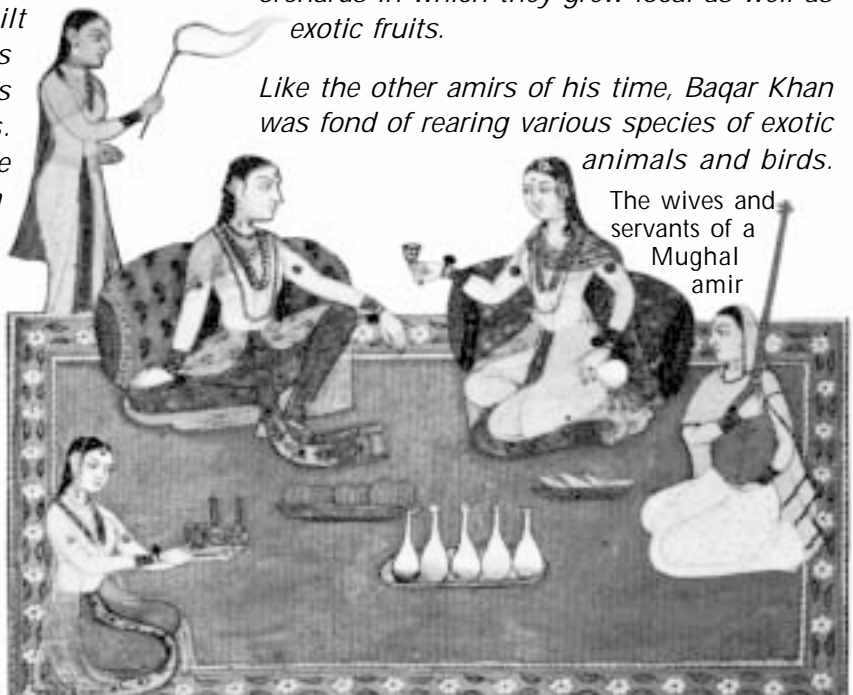
for a day was never worn again.

Their normal everyday clothes were made of the finest muslin and coloured silk, with zari work in gold and silver.

Their food contained the most expensive items of the times. Wine was brought from Iran and ice from Kashmir. They maintained their own orchards in which they grew local as well as exotic fruits.

Like the other amirs of his time, Baqar Khan was fond of rearing various species of exotic animals and birds.

The wives and servants of a Mughal amir



Apart from camels, elephants and horses, he also kept tigers, cheetahs, deer, hawks, colourful parrots, parakeets and peacocks on his grounds. One form of entertainment was to watch fights that were arranged between these animals.

Baqar Khan also had a karkhana (karKanaa), a kind of workshop, not too far from his palace. It was used to make all the items used in the Baqar Khan household - clothes, carpets, silver and gold jewellery, objects of wood, etc. These items were not sold but used in Baqar Khan's home. Often, famous craftsmen of the area would be brought to the workshop and made to work there.

Baqar Khan needed to collect several lakh rupees from his jagir. He appointed many amils

to do this work. He also employed many clerks and servants in his palace to keep an eye on the amils and maintain an account of the money collected.

Such a huge household with so many servants and underlings meant a great deal of expense. From time to time, expensive gifts had also to be given to the emperor, princes and other high officials.

Apart from spending money on themselves, amirs like Baqar Khan also spent it on buildings for public use by the common people.

Baqar Khan built two mosques with madarsas attached to them. He also built a sarai to provide shelter to travelers. If he had been a Rajput amir he would have constructed temples and a pathshala for Hindus. Like the Irani-Turani amirs, the Rajput and Sheikhzada

amirs also lived in opulent luxury. They had grand palaces, hundreds of servants and employees, male and female slaves and many wives. The magnificent palaces of the Rajput amirs can be seen even today in Rajasthan.

Exercises

- 1 How did Baqar Khan get into government service? Can a person get a government job in the same way today?**
- 2 Who stood guarantee for the *mansabdars*? Why was the guarantee taken? Does this sort of thing happen these days as well?**
- 3 For what work did Baqar Khan appoint an amil? Why did he take guarantee money from the amil ?**
- 4 How was the inspection of Baqar Khan's cavalry contingent carried out and why?**
- 5 Write six sentences on what you might have seen in Baqar Khan's household if you had gotten a chance to visit him in those days.**
- 6 Last year you read about the *bhogpatis*. In those days, instead of salaries the king gave his officers villages for their pleasure and enjoyment. The officers were permitted to extract any kind of tax and carry on the administration in whatever way they chose to.**

These 'bhog' villages remained with the same officer and his descendants.



An amir in a state of undress



Village Life in Mughal Times

In the times of the Mughals, India was considered to be one of the more prosperous countries in the world. Mughals, Rajputs and Afghans battled each other just to lay claim over this prosperity. The wealth enabled jagirdars, zamindars and raja-maharajahs to lead lives of comfort and luxury, and enabled Mughal emperors to erect fabulous monuments such as the Red Fort and the Taj Mahal. With an eye on this prosperity, traders also came from Europe to India.

However, the wealth of India did not simply fall out of the sky. The secret of the power of the Mughal empire and the wealth of the Mughal amirs lay in the fields - in the hard labour of the peasants. Mughal emperors and amirs partook of the yield of the peasants in the form of land tax.

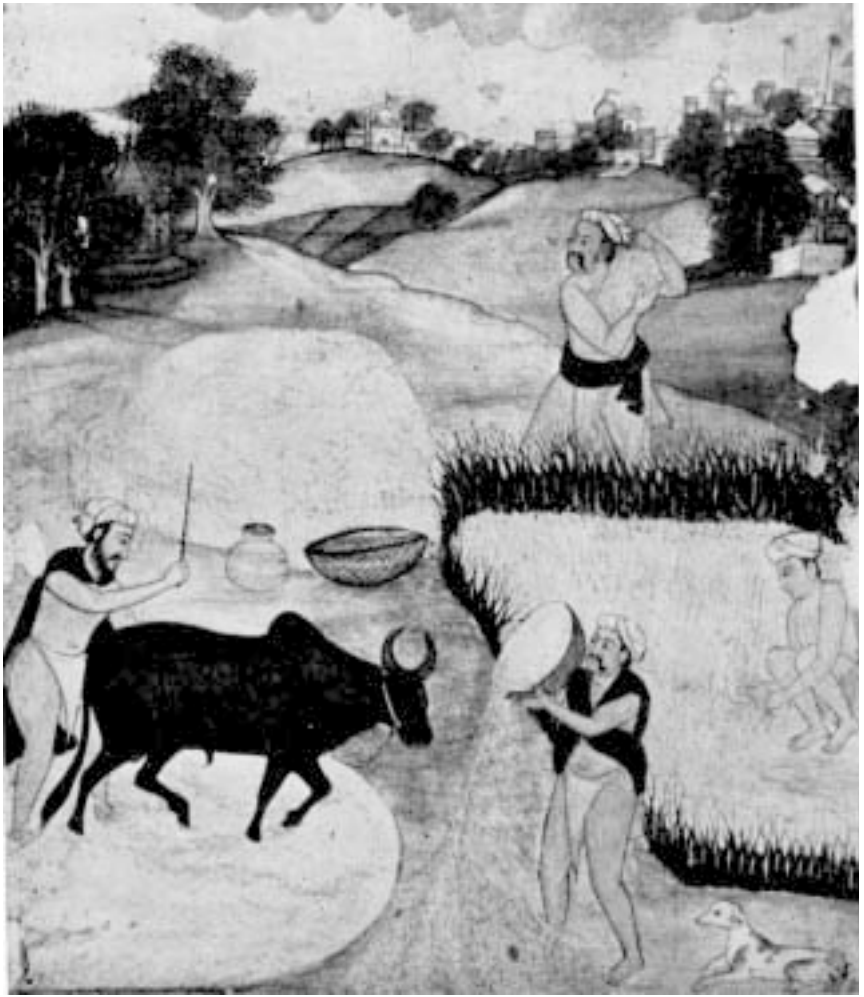
What kind of life did the peasants have? What were their homes like? What did they grow? How much tax did they pay? How much were they able to save? Come, let's read about the life of peasants in Mughal times in this chapter.

What can you find out from this picture about village houses, about people's clothing, and about their lives and work?

Villages

Below is a scene from a village in the Mughal period. It was painted during the time of Akbar.



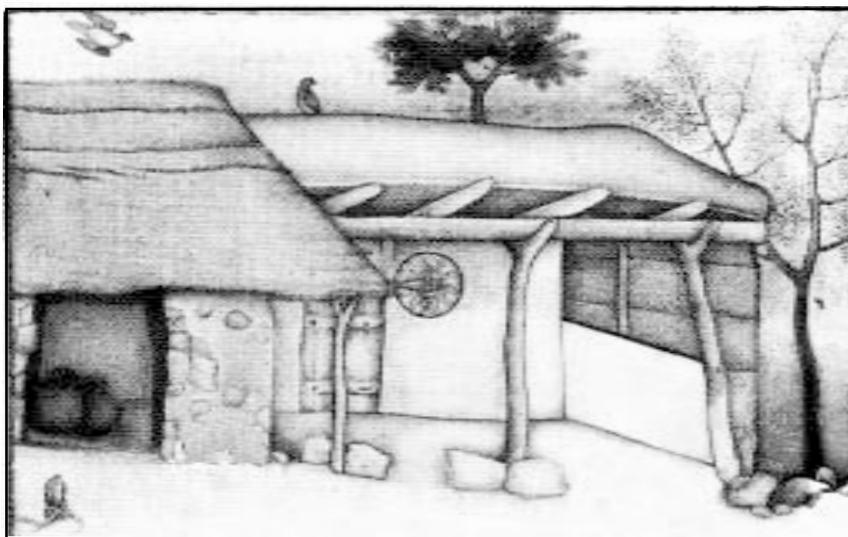


What do these pictures that were painted in Mughal times tell you about how peasants lived then?



The villages had rich as well as poor people. This picture of a common peasant's house was painted by an artist named Bichitra. What materials have been used to make this house?

Most peasants lived in huts of wattle and daub (woven reeds or bamboo plastered with mud). Driven from their homes by war, famine, drought and oppression, the peasants would often have to quickly leave their houses and set up shelter in new places.

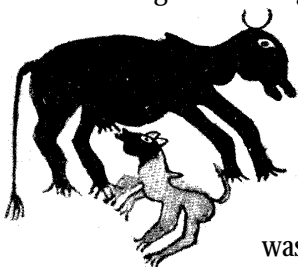


A village hut in Mughal times

Food

Now let us take a look inside the hut of a common peasant. You would find only a few utensils, and they would be made of clay. In those days, brass and bronze were very expensive and aluminium and steel had not come into use.

The clay utensils would be used to cook khichdi (iKcaDI) of moong and rice, and to make rotis of bajra or jowar. Along with this there might also be a little vegetable and ghee. Because milk was available aplenty in those days, ghee was quite inexpensive. Apart from ghee, sesame (til) and mustard (sarson) oil was also used.



Why would more ghee have been available in those days? Discuss in your class.

Groundnuts were not grown in South Asia then, hence its oil was not available.

Also many vegetables that you now eat were not grown here in those days.

Till the Mughal times, potatoes, pumpkins, tomatoes, peas, chilly, guavas, and custard apples were not grown at all in South Asia. These are all fruits and vegetables from South and North America which traders from Europe brought to India towards the end of the Mughal period.

However, vegetables such as broadbeans, spinach, sweet potatoes, gourds of different kinds (ribbed, bitter, bottle, etc.) ladyfingers, and brinjals were common.

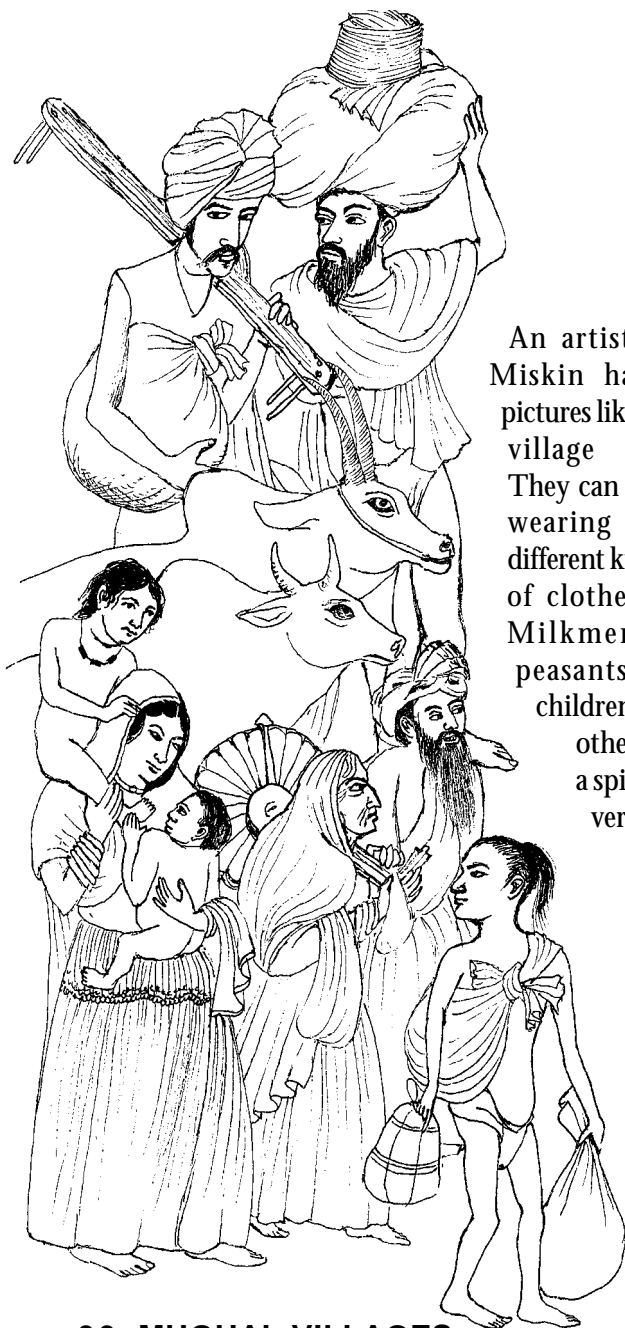
Common fruits were bananas, mangoes, jack-fruits, watermelons, ber, grapes and pomegranates.

In those days chilly was not grown in India. What do you think people would have used in its place?

Cloth and Clothing

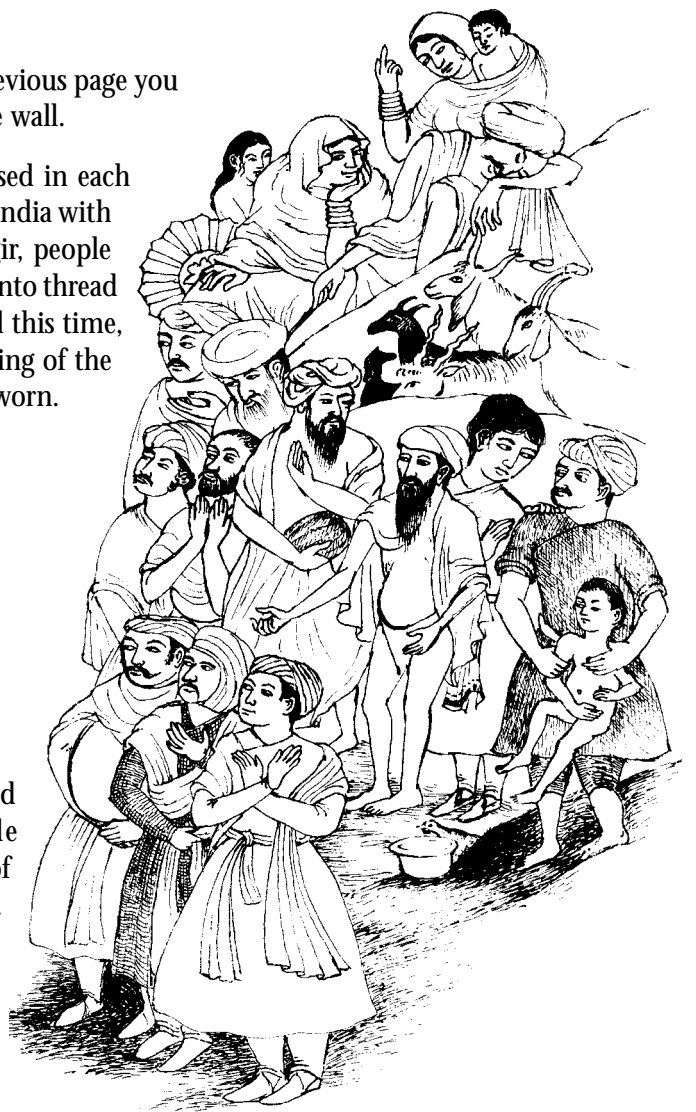
If you look carefully at the picture on the top of the previous page you will spot a charkha (spinning wheel) hanging from the wall.

In those days, the spinning wheel had begun to be used in each house. We mentioned before that the charkha came to India with the Turkish people. By the time of Akbar and Jahangir, people had widely adopted its use. Women would spin cotton into thread and the village weaver would weave it into cloth. Until this time, the people of India wore less cloth. But, after the coming of the spinning wheel greater quantities of cloth came to be worn.



An artist named Miskin has made pictures like these of village people. They can be seen wearing many different kinds of clothes. Milkmen, peasants, jogis, children, women and many

other kinds of people can be seen. Can you find someone with a spinning wheel? Can you distinguish between those who were very poor and those not so poor? Look carefully at the picture to spot them.



Agriculture

As is the case today, in Mughal times too the biggest problem in farming was that of irrigation. In those days, people had to make do with tanks, canals and wells. There were no motor pumps or electricity, as we have today. Therefore, much less land could be irrigated. Most of the land was unirrigated. Thus only the monsoon crop (kharif) could be grown in many places.



Since there were no chemical fertilizers or pesticides, or high yielding seeds, the yield was less than it is today. But still, the productivity of the land (the yield per hectare) was amongst the highest in the world in those days.

The soil in the river valleys of India is extremely rich. With their hard work and intelligence, the peasants took advantage of this soil to raise two crops in a year.

On the other hand, in the best fields in most European countries farmers could grow only one or two crops in three years. The soil there was not good enough to grow wheat two years in a row – so after growing one wheat crop each field would be left untilled to fallow, or planted with oats in rotation.

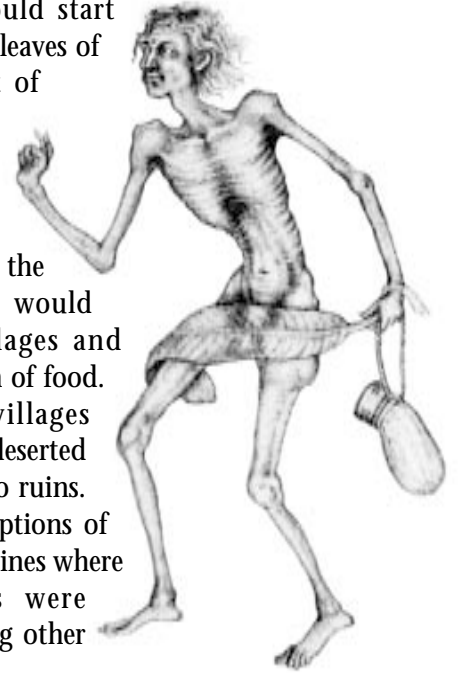
Most parts of Europe have a heavy and deep soil. Such soil cannot be ploughed without a special, strong kind of plough. But such ploughs were not made in those days. That is why the productivity of European soil was much lower than that of Indian soil.

European travellers were astonished to see that not only could Indian peasants grow two crops in a year in some areas, but also so many different kinds of crops could grow in the warm climate of India. In a single village, fifteen kinds of kharif (monsoon) crops and ten kinds of rabi (winter) crops might be grown. In addition to this, fruits, vegetables, and spices were also grown. There was hardly any other country in those days where such varied crops were grown in a single village. This productivity was indeed the basis of India's famed prosperity.

However, even though they grew so many crops, the peasants remained very poor. Many children would die of malnutrition and the common people lived under the threat of starvation.

The Condition of the Peasants

When the rains were sufficient and the crops were also good, the peasants would have enough to get by. But they would not be able to save anything for difficult times. Thus, whenever the rains were scanty and water sources dried up, the crops could not grow, and then the peasants would have absolutely nothing to live on. In times of famine, thousands of people would become victims of starvation and epidemics. Things would get so bad that people would start eating grass and leaves of wild trees. Out of desperation, many peasants would sell themselves and their children to the wealthy. People would leave their villages and wander in search of food. Hundreds of villages would thus be deserted and slowly fall to ruins. There are descriptions of such terrible famines where human beings were reduced to eating other human beings.



Such is the story of the peasants of the Mughal period - all the wealth was grown in their fields and all the poverty resided in their homes.



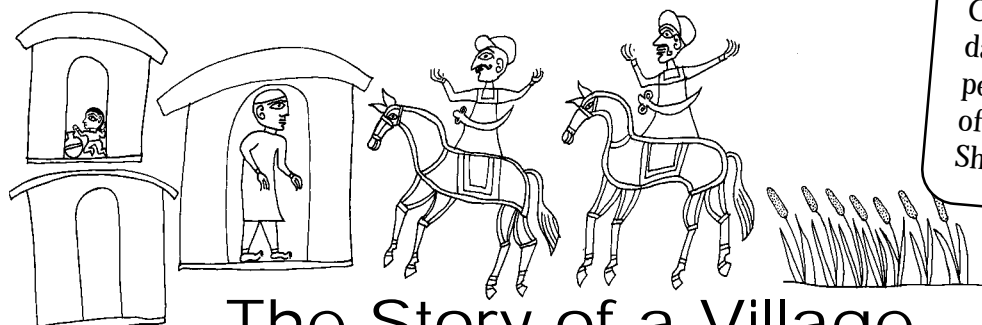
A sick man attended by horn players, drawn in the Punjab hills

You must be thinking, how did this happen? After all, what happened to all the large harvests that peasants reaped?

Land tax

A large part of the agricultural produce was taken away in the form of tax. During the time of Akbar, one third of the crop would be taken from the peasants as tax. But in the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan the burden of taxation kept increasing.

By the year 1700, half the yield was being taken from the peasants as tax. Can you imagine, after taxes had been paid and grain set aside for seeds, what would be left for the needs of the peasant's families?



Come, let us visit a village of those days. Let us get to know what the people underwent during the times of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb.

The Story of a Village

(Village Kararia, Suba Agra)

Tax to be paid in cash, not in grain

In the suba of Agra lay the village of Kararia. As villages went it was quite small - with about 80 peasant families. There were also 5 families of craftsmen, who made things of wood, iron and leather. Some craftsmen made clay pots and some wove cloth. Most of the peasants were Jats by caste, but there were also some Gujar peasants.

It was around the year 1580. The kharif crop stood swaying in the breeze -- bajra, jowar, moong, moth, til and kodon. One day, a group of horsemen came to the village from the nearby town of Bayana. On entering, they went straight to the house of the zamindar, Suraj Dev Jat. In a few moments the news had spread in the whole village that these men had come to measure the peasant's fields to assess how much tax they would have to pay.

The patel (headman) of the village and the patwari (accountant) were summoned to the house of the zamindar. They were the wealthier and more important peasants of the village who helped in collecting the taxes from the people.

In the evening the panchayat was called and all the people of the village collected at the

chaupal (square). The officer who had come from Bayana to fix the tax was called Puranmal. He said, "We have come here under orders from Muzaffar Khan and Raja Todarmal, the ministers of Emperor Akbar. The emperor has changed the system of assessing and collecting tax for the whole empire. This year you will pay the land-tax not in grain, but in money."

Immediately, a whisper started up among the people. After some time a peasant stood up to say, "But till now we have been paying land-tax only in grain." Puranmal said, "You can now sell your crop in Bayana and pay land-tax from that cash."



Trying to get the peasants to his side, the zamindar Suraj Dev said, "Why are you getting so upset? Earlier too you paid one third of the crop - you still have to pay the same. Only, not in grain, but in cash."

"We had heard that Emperor Akbar is good and we thought that he might reduce the land-tax. But now he's just added to our troubles," a peasant said.

What had been changed -- the quantity of taxation or the form of taxation?

In comparison with the peasants of the Mughal period, do the peasants of today have to pay more as land tax or less?

What advantage would the jagirdar have had if the tax was paid in cash instead of grain?

and jaggery (गड़) from villages and then sell them in various distant cities. Starting from the hills of the Himalayas, they would move, selling and buying, all the way to Cambay, Bengal and south India.

All the peasants sold their grain to these banjaras. In exchange for some of the grain, they bought salt and for the rest they took cash so that the tax could be paid.

The Collection of Land Tax

A few days later the amil of the jagirdar turned up in the village.

Do you remember who the amil was and what he did?

The Peasants Sell Grain to the Banjaras

That year all the peasants of Kararia carted their grain to Bayana. Peasants from many nearby villages had also brought their grain. Much more grain was brought for sale at Bayana than ever before.

Buying and selling grain was done by the banjaras (migrant traders). A group of 30-40 banjaras would travel from place to place with 200-300 bullocks. They would purchase grain, sugar

The amil went to the house of the zamindar Suraj Dev Jat and told him to collect the tax from the people of the village. The amil said, "In your village the kharif crop has been sown over a total of 9,000 bighas. I have calculated this with the patwari. This adds up to Rs. 17,000 in tax. Please have this amount collected and kept for me. I am going for a round of the other villages of my jagirdar. When I return in ten days I will take the money from you."

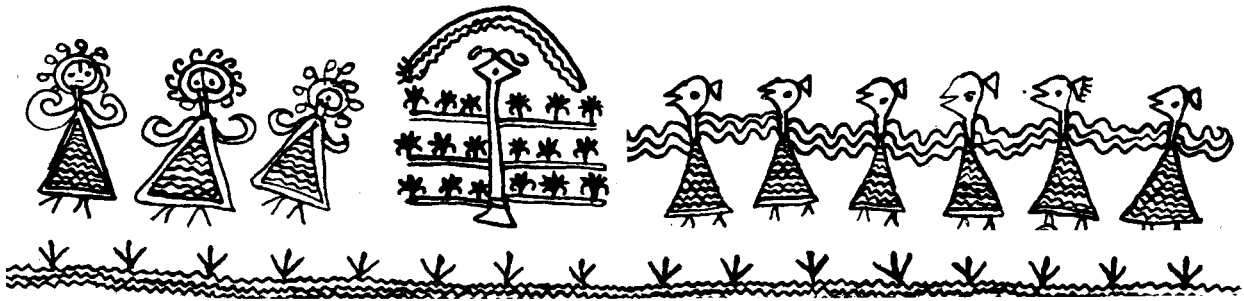
Suraj Dev Jat called the patel and the patwari and told them to collect the tax from the peasants. The patwari said, "And what if someone refuses to pay?"

The zamindar said, "Two of my horsemen and four soldiers will go with you; let me see who has the guts to refuse."

After two-three days they had collected the tax from most of the people. No tax could be collected from some peasants whose crop had been lost due to hail.



Banjaras loading grain



When the amil of the jagirdar came, Suraj Dev handed him the money collected as tax along with an account. The patel and the zamindar together explained that due to hail, land-tax could not be paid by some peasants. The payment due could be noted against their names and collected from them over the next two-three years. The amil had this noted in the account of the patwari.

When the amil was about to leave, Suraj Dev hinted that he had forgotten about something; at which the amil handed him ten percent of the total land-tax collected. This was Suraj Dev's 'malikana' or commission. In return for having the land-tax collected from the village people, the zamindars were paid this malikana.

The amil paid the patel and also the patwari some percentage of the land-tax.

As it is, the zamindars and patels were given a discount in land-tax. They paid only one-fourth of their produce in land-tax whereas the common peasants were required to pay one third of their crop.

Who was benefiting by the collection of land-tax?

If there was no zamindar, patel and patwari, what are the things that the jagirdar's amil would have had to do to collect land-tax?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

What did the amil give the zamindar for his help?

Was the amil able to collect the entire amount of the jagirdar's salary?

Debt

The common peasant had many difficulties. Sometimes the crop would not fetch a good price in the market. Then they would not have enough money to pay the land-tax. In such a situation they would have to borrow money from the money-lender to pay the tax. If they were unable to pay, the zamindar's men would often beat them up.

"We Will Farm Elsewhere!"

Burdened with debt, three peasant families decided to leave Kararia village for another place. They had heard that the amil of that place was giving concession in land-tax to newcomers who would settle there. He was also giving taqavi (a development loan) to buy oxen and ploughs.

After these three families had decided to leave, they went to the patel of the village to tell him. The patel frowned and said, "Very well. But there are 20 bighas of land in your name in this village. Who will pay the land-tax for that? The jagirdar's amil will demand his entire money, whether the land has been tilled or not. If you go away, we will have to go around trying to find someone who will plough your land. You think leaving your land and running away is just a joke? No one can just get up and leave their land!"

"But what shall we do with the land? We have neither ploughs, nor oxen nor seeds. All our farming is being done in debt - that doesn't leave anything for us to eat," the peasants replied.



Hearing this the voice of the patel rose in anger, "Go! Let me see how you run away from the village! I will send the zamindar's soldiers and have you arrested. Then you can starve in prison!" he said.

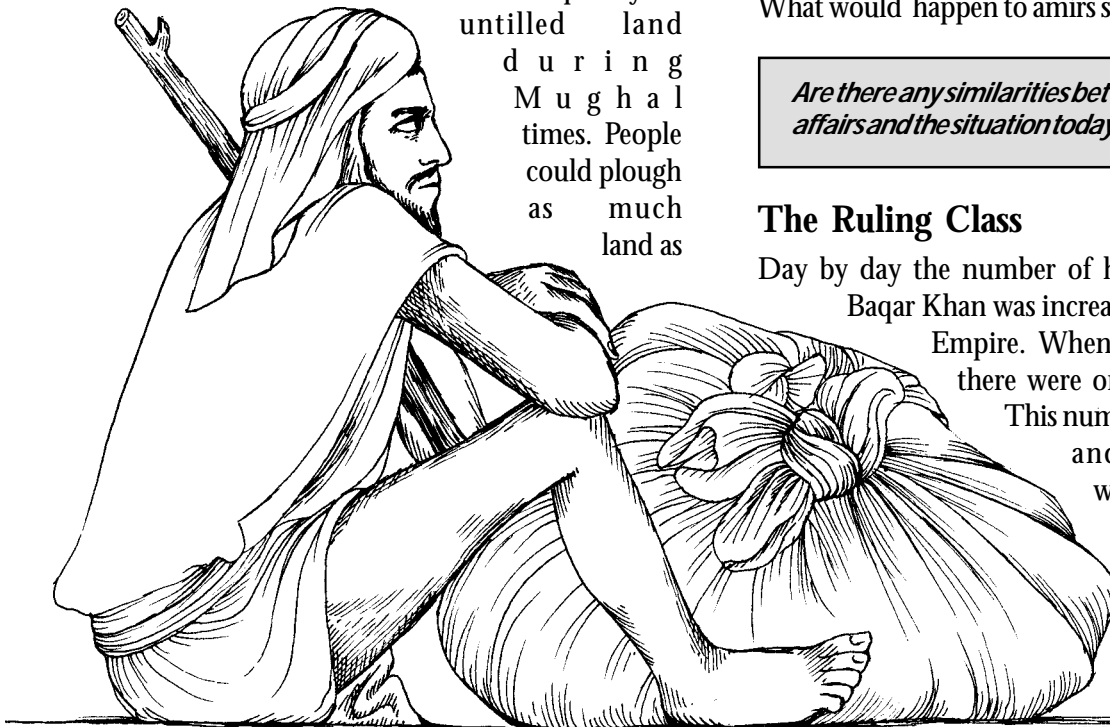
This threat scared the peasants. In silence they returned to their homes. But hardly a month had passed before one of the families ran away at night and could not be traced even after a great deal of searching.

The village patel had tried to stop the people from leaving. For whose good did he do this?

The zamindars kept soldiers. What have you understood about the functions of these soldiers so far?

No Field to Remain Unsown

There was plenty of untilled land during Mughal times. People could plough as much land as



they wanted. That is why those peasants who suffered hardships in one place would often leave their villages in the hope of taking up farming in another place. This tendency of the peasants irritated the zamindars and jagirdars. They wanted more and more peasants to come and settle in their areas and farm as much land as possible. That is why they would give newcomers land as well as concessions in land-tax.

They would also try hard to prevent peasants from running away from their areas. If they could not stop a peasant family from leaving, they would give the land to another peasant to plough so that there would be some crop and the land-tax could be paid. However, if the original owner of the land returned he could get his land back. But in his absence, the fields could not remain unsown. For if fields remained uncultivated, how would the jagirdars, the zamindars and the emperor manage? What would happen to amirs such as Baqar Khan?

Are there any similarities between this state of affairs and the situation today? Explain.

The Ruling Class

Day by day the number of high amirs such as Baqar Khan was increasing in the Mughal Empire. When Akbar was ruling there were only 51 high amirs.

This number kept increasing and in 1700 there were more than 500 such amirs.

How were the expenses of all these amirs to be met?

Taxes Go Up in Kararia

By the time of Emperors Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, land-tax had increased tremendously - from one third of the crop under Akbar, to one half. In addition to what was permitted by the emperor, the jagirdars would try to extract even higher taxes.

It must have been the year 1655. The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had given Kararia village to Raja Jai Singh as jagir. Jai Singh was a prominent amir of the Mughal empire.

No sooner was the kharif crop harvested than the amil of Raja Jai Singh appeared to collect the land-tax. The first thing he said to the zamindar was, "This time the peasants will pay a new tax. It will be used to pay the fee for the patwari, instead of having it paid by the jagirdar."

Flaring up at this, the zamindar said, "How can this be done? Already the rate at which you are taxing the peasants doesn't even leave them with enough to eat! Now we are reaching a point where we zamindars can't even collect from the peasants what it has been our right to collect. Go! Go and tell the jagirdar that the people of this village will not pay this new tax!"

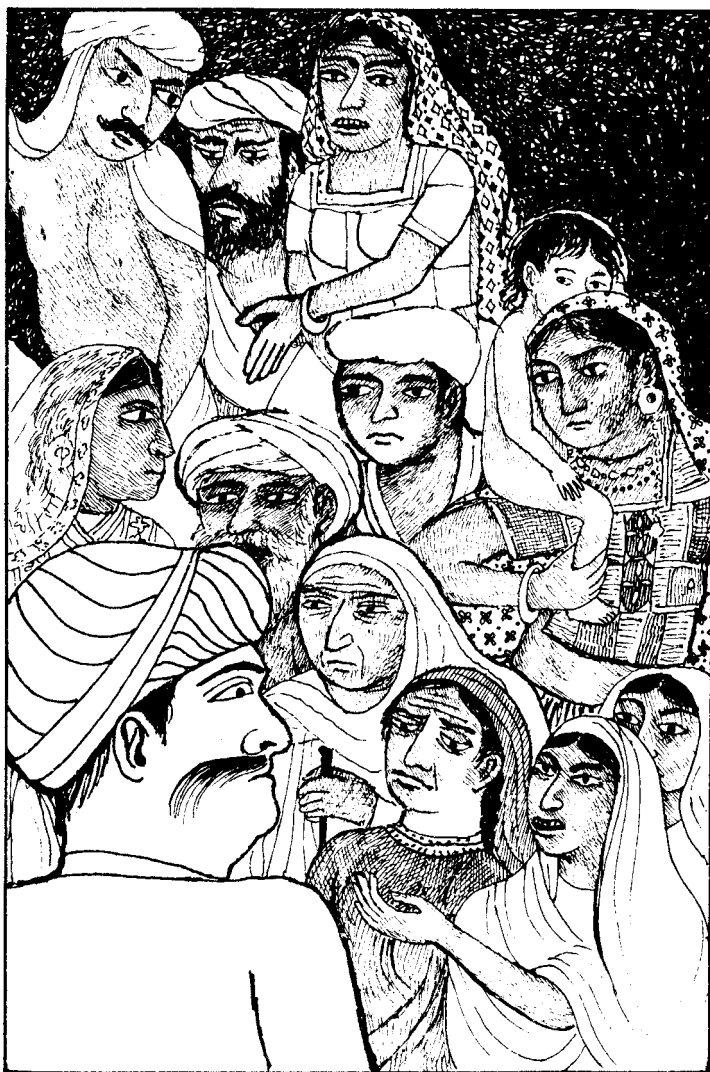
You know how the zamindars had to pay a lower rate of tax in comparison to the peasants. They also received a portion of the land-tax that the jagirdar took from the peasants. On top of this, they would make the peasants pay them additional amounts on various pretexts. Like the bhogpatis in the old days (who you read about last year), the zamindars used to extract levies from the peasants on their houses, cattle, on weddings, journeys, festivals and so on.

In whose interest did the zamindar oppose the amil's attempt to increase tax?

At the panchayat the peasants gave the amil a piece of their mind. They said that if no one else in the nearby area pays this tax, why should they?

Despite all this, the amil remained stubborn and threatened that if the patwari fees did not come from Kararia he would return with the army and create havoc.

The next day the people of the village decided in the panchayat that they would take their complaint to Raja Jai Singh at Agra. They collected some other peasants from nearby villages and around 20 of them reached Agra.



The Peasants Complain to the Jagirdar

In the grand palace of Raja Jai Singh, the peasants narrated their woes. One peasant said, "Maharaj, last year 50 maunds of jowar grew in my field. The amil took 25 maunds in land-tax. The zamindar took away 7 maunds in addition. And then, showing some earlier dues, the amil took away another 5 maunds. On top of this the village moneylender claimed 2 maunds because last year I had borrowed from him for seed. And now this year a new tax is being imposed. From where will we pay it and if we do manage to pay it, what will we eat?"

Listening to such accounts, the jagirdar agreed to remove the new tax and told them that he would tell the amil not to collect it. The peasants breathed a sigh of relief and left for their village.

But the very next year Raja Jai Singh was transferred and a new jagirdar came in his place. His amil too tried to collect the new tax. When this happened 40 peasant families left Kararia for another village.

The Peasants Plead with the Emperor

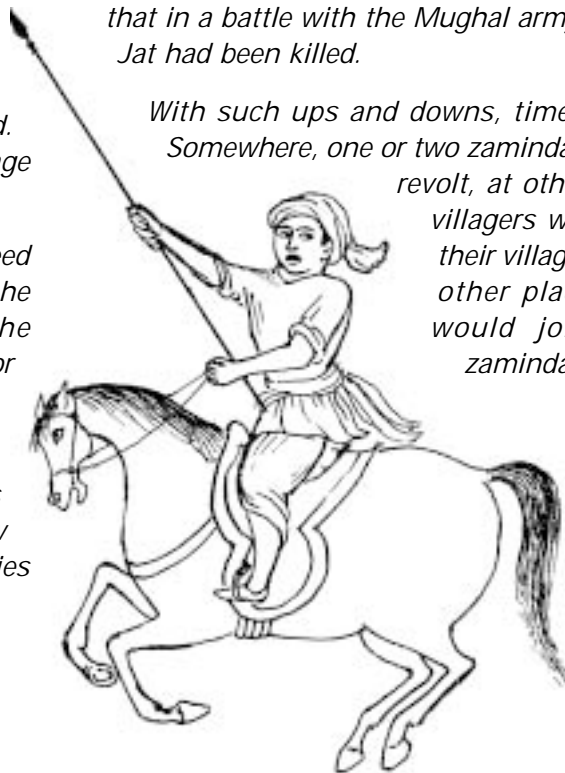
Over time, the situation in Delhi, Agra, Bayana and other nearby villages continued to worsen. All around, the excesses of jagirdars and their amils increased. Peasants of many villages even reached emperor Aurangzeb with their appeals.

The emperor did promise them that they would be protected but he did not want to do anything against his jagirdars. He issued many farmans to his officers saying that illegal taxes should not be taken, under no condition should more than half the crop be taken, and the peasants should be helped to improve and increase cultivation. But no one listened to these grand proclamations.

Zamindars Rebel against Mughal Rule

Meanwhile, news reached Kararia that a zamindar named Gokula Jat had rebelled against the emperor and the peasants of nearby villages had joined him. The zamindar of Kararia also thought of joining them. But he was also afraid - after all how could they face the mighty Mughal army! In a few days the news came that in a battle with the Mughal army, Gokula Jat had been killed.

With such ups and downs, time passed. Somewhere, one or two zamindars would revolt, at other places villagers would flee their villages and at other places they would join rebel zamindars.



The main problem that the peasants had against Mughal rule was that they were charged a land-tax beyond all reasonable limits. However, why did the zamindars rebel against the Mughals? What was their grudge against Mughal rule?

Think over these questions:

Would the zamindars have benefited more if Mughal rule had not been there?

What benefit did the peasants hope to get by helping the zamindars to fight against the Mughals?

The Revolt of Raja Ram Jat

Fourteen years after the death of Gokula Jat there was another wave of protest. Some 30 kilometers from Kararia, the zamindar of a village named Sinsini revolted against Mughal rule in 1683. His name was Raja Ram Jat. He refused to pay the land-tax collected from the peasants to the jagirdar, Nawab Khan-e-Jahan, because he wanted to set up a kingdom of his own. Great was the excitement in Kararia and nearby villages. Nawab Khan-e-Jahan marched towards Sinsini to crush the revolt of Ram Jat. The raja of Amber, Bishan Das, also sent his army to assist Khan-e-Jahan.

Meanwhile, one day some peasants of Sinsini turned up in Kararia as they had relatives in the village. That very evening they called all the people of the village and told them about Sinsini and Raja Ram Jat. They said, "This time we will make these jagirdars bite the dust. Let the nawab and the raja of Amber come against us. All of you should also help us in this fight." A peasant said, "We need young men to fight the Mughal army. If we can get even ten young men from your village it will be of great help."

Almost at once came a voice from the crowd, "I'm ready. I'll come to Sinsini to fight the Mughal army!" Soon many other voices had risen. "Yes, me too", "Yes, I'll come too." Before long 22 of them had volunteered. That very

night they tied up their luggage, took their swords and spears and left to join the army of Raja Ram Jat.

About twenty days passed by. One day one of the boys who had gone to Sinsini came panting on a horse to Kararia. Standing in the middle of the village, he called out in jubilation, "Listen! Listen, people of the village, listen to how we defeated the armies of nawab Khan-e-Jahan and the king of Amber, Bishan Das. Listen to how we made the jagirdars and the fauzdars flee."

When the people of the village had collected he narrated the whole story. The army of Raja Ram Jat had repelled two attacks of Nawab Khan-e-Jahan. The nawab had been defeated and forced to flee. A wave of surprise and joy spread among the people of Kararia.

"Did the Jat peasants really defeat and chase away the army of the Mughals? How could this be?" Excited people with these thoughts on their minds moved towards the house of zamindar Suraj Dev, to persuade him to join hands with Raja Ram Jat.

Thus started the revolt of the people of Kararia village. The Mughal rule was rocked by this and many similar revolts. It became more and more difficult to collect land-tax. Now they had to fight to claim every rupee from the villages.



Exercises

- 1 What was the difference between agriculture in Europe and India in Mughal times?
- 2 What changes took place in the land-tax system in Akbar's time and what remained as before? Make a list.
- 3 What kind of help would the zamindar of Kararia village, Suraj Dev Jat, give to the amil?
- 4 (a) How did the patel of Kararia prevent the peasants from leaving the village and why?
(b) In the Mughal period, if some peasants went away, leaving their village and land, what would be done with their land? Also explain the reasons for this.

- 5 What did the zamindars take from the peasants? When the jagirdars started collecting more tax, what difficulty did this create for the zamindars?

- 6 The peasants made many attempts to solve their problems. What examples of such attempts did you see in this chapter?

- 7 (a) Against whom did Raja Ram Jat rebel and why?

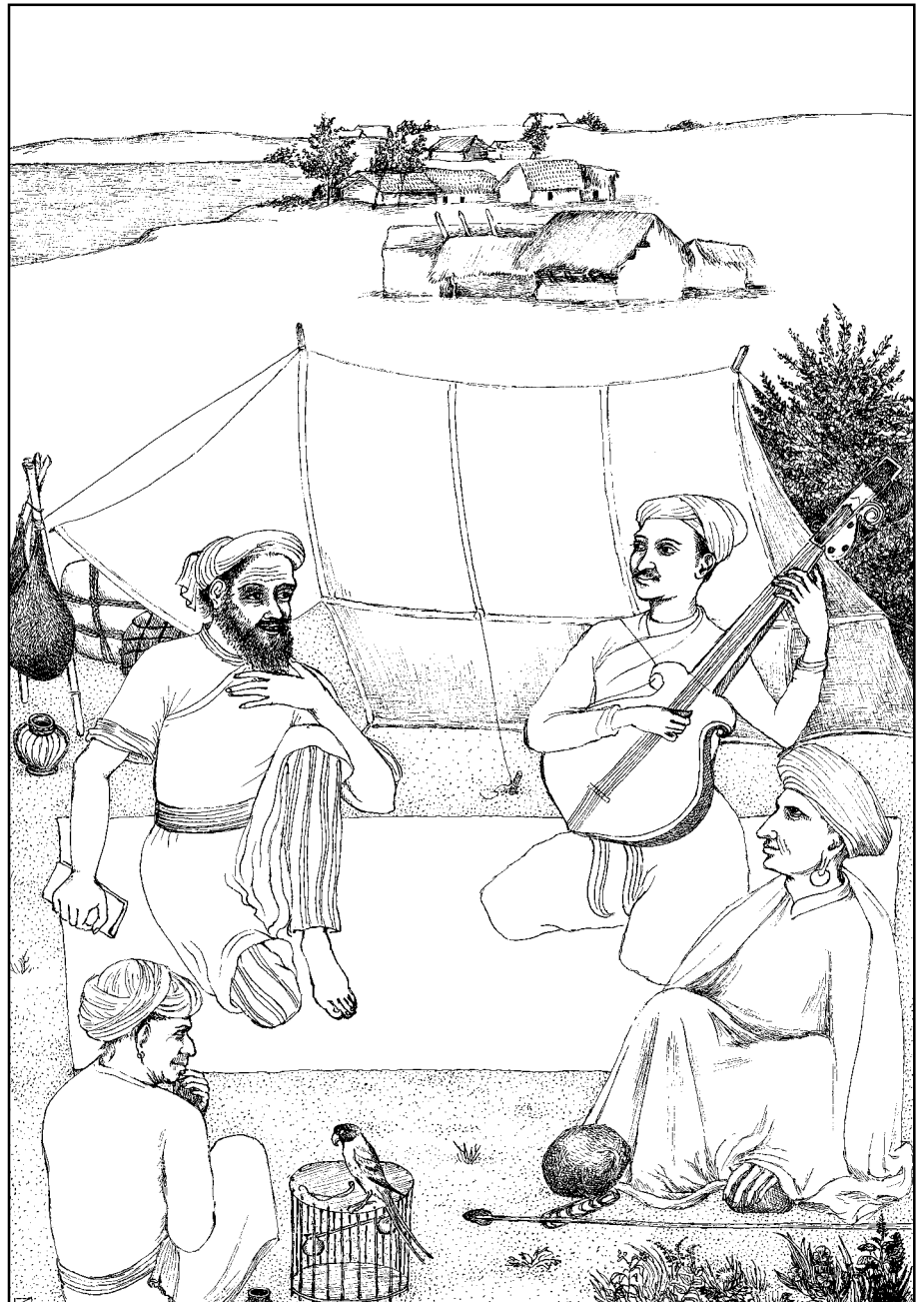
(b) Why did some people of Kararia go to join the army of Raja Ram Jat?

- 8 In Jahangir's court there was a painter named Govardhan. He made a picture like the one on the right. Some people are enjoying the singing of wandering singers. At some distance the village can be seen.

(a) Does this village look like the villages of today?

(b) What are the other things you can see in this picture?

(c) What might the occupations of the people shown in the picture be?



The Times of Emperor Aurangzeb

(Reign: 1658 to 1707)

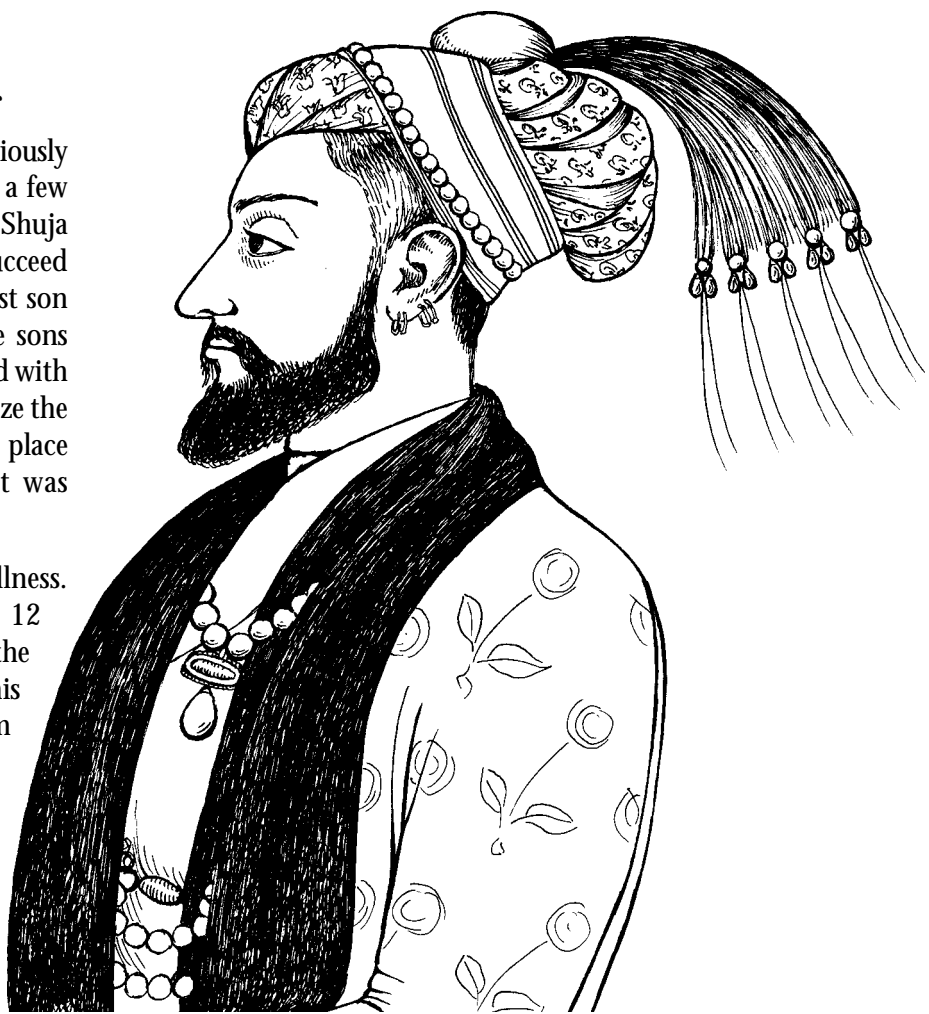
Aurangzeb Becomes the Emperor

In the year 1658, Emperor Shahjahan fell seriously ill. Everyone thought that he would die in a few days. He had four sons - Dara, Aurangzeb, Shuja and Murad. All four brothers wanted to succeed to the throne. Shahjahan declared his eldest son Dara as his successor. But the other three sons refused to accept this. Each of them marched with their armies towards Agra, the capital, to seize the Mughal throne. A number of battles took place between the brothers and in the end it was Aurangzeb who emerged successful.

However, his father recovered from his illness. Although Shahjahan lived on for another 12 years, Aurangzeb declared himself to be the emperor and kept his father in prison till his death. Aurangzeb had to face a lot of criticism for doing this.

Explain the meaning of these words:

- (a) successor
- (b) seizing the throne
- (c) criticism



Uprisings of Peasants and Zamindars and Decline in Revenue

Like all other emperors Aurangzeb too had his share of problems. One big problem was from the

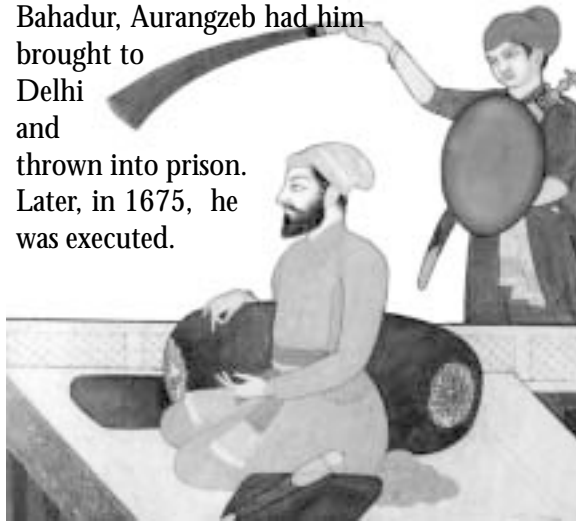
peasants and zamindars. As you know, the Jat peasants and zamindars around Agra and Bayana had started rebelling. Such uprisings were now taking place in many parts of the empire.



Muslim religious scholars in the court

In Punjab there were many peasants, craftsmen and traders who followed the teachings of Guru Nanak, who had taught that all human beings are equal. Guru Teg Bahadur, who was a follower of Guru Nanak's teachings, would travel from village to village to preach. This created an atmosphere that encouraged peasants to stand up to the jagirdars and rajas. The rulers became anxious about the increasing possibility of peasants' revolts.

To check the growing impact of Guru Teg Bahadur, Aurangzeb had him brought to Delhi and thrown into prison. Later, in 1675, he was executed.



Guru Teg Bahadur

Subsequently, his son Guru Govind Singh organised the followers of Guru Nanak and called them Sikhs. He formed an army of Sikhs and went to battle with the rajas of Punjab. As these rajas were under Mughal suzerainty, Aurangzeb gave them all the help they needed to keep the Sikhs under check. But the Sikhs gathered a large army and began clashing with the Mughals time and again.

Another problem that Aurangzeb faced was from Afghan tribes who believed in the Roshania sect of Islam. They lived in the northwestern part of the Mughal empire, and they wanted to set up

their own separate kingdom, free from the Mughals. In 1665 they started revolting against the Mughals. Aurangzeb suppressed the Roshanias with the help of the Rajputs.

These were some of the bigger revolts to take place during the time of Aurangzeb. Apart from these, many other smaller rebellions took place. As a result of these rebellions, the jagirdars began getting less revenue from their jagirs.

A Shortage of Jagirs

The number of officials and amirs in the service of Mughal emperors was increasing year by year. But as time went by, there were not enough jagirs for them. The state was running out of villages and towns to give as big jagirs for salaries to so many amirs. Besides, the jagirs that did exist were not yielding the revenue that was due from them.

Due to this shortage, discontent and tension was growing among the jagirdars. Aurangzeb would say, "My position is like that of a doctor, who has one pomegranate (Anaar) and a hundred patients. To how many patients can he give that one pomegranate?" (The pomegranate fruit was considered to be an effective tonic.)

One way out of this situation was to expand the area under cultivation within the jagirs. This way the income of the jagirdars could increase. But the jagirdars had little interest in developing the agriculture of their jagirs, since the jagirs kept getting changed and transferred between different jagirdars.

How do you think the transfer of jagirs would discourage jagirdars from developing cultivation?

Attempts to Expand the Empire

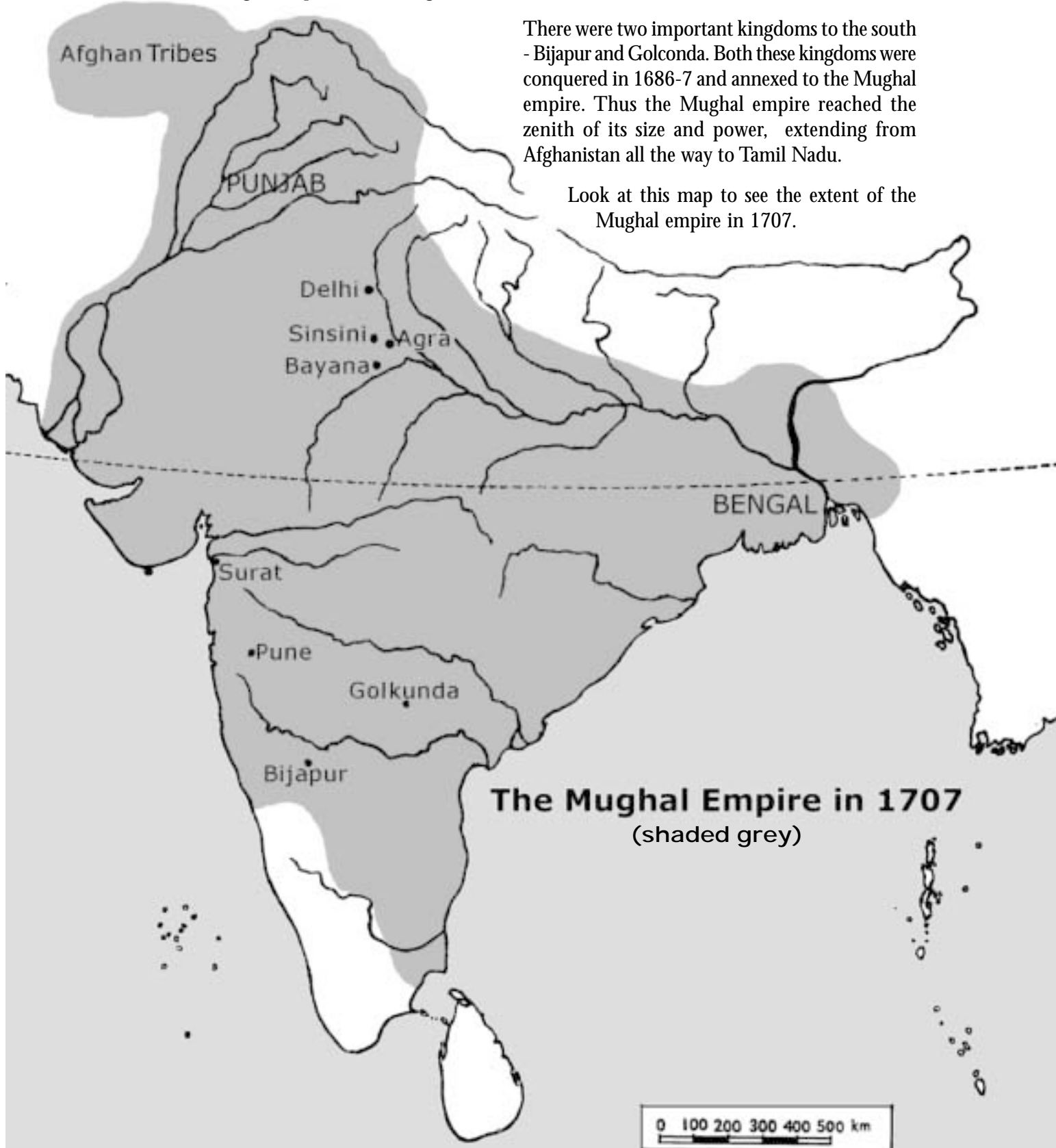
Aurangzeb had one other alternative way to tackle the problem of scarcity of jagirs. That was to expand his empire and annex other kingdoms into his own.

To the east of the Mughal empire was the kingdom

of Ahom. This was in the present-day Assam. In 1663 an amir of Aurangzeb, Mir Jumla, defeated the Ahom king and annexed his kingdom into the Mughal empire. But in just a few years, the Ahom king was able to drive the Mughal army away and become free once again.

There were two important kingdoms to the south - Bijapur and Golconda. Both these kingdoms were conquered in 1686-7 and annexed to the Mughal empire. Thus the Mughal empire reached the zenith of its size and power, extending from Afghanistan all the way to Tamil Nadu.

Look at this map to see the extent of the Mughal empire in 1707.





Aurangzeb hunting, using pets as decoys

Bijapur and Golconda were too powerful to be conquered just by military force. To defeat them the chief commanders and officials of those kingdoms were given high posts and jagirs by the Mughal emperor. The amirs switched sides and enabled Aurangzeb to defeat Bijapur and Golconda. But the revenue that came from these two kingdoms was spent on paying the amirs from these areas and other new amirs. Thus, winning these kingdoms did not prove to be of great help to the Mughals and jagirs continued to be scarce for the old amirs.

Both the attempts to spread agriculture and increase the size of the empire did not solve the problem of the scarcity of jagirs. During the time of Aurangzeb and later on too, there continued to be a shortage of jagirs to give to the Mughal amirs.

Why did the expansion of the empire not solve the problem of jagirs? Explain in your own words.

Shivaji and the Marathas

You read how the Afghan tribes, the Jat zamindars and the Ahom kings wanted to establish their own separate kingdoms and did not want to accept the rule of the Mughals. In the southern part of India Aurangzeb had to confront another power that was not easy to overcome.



Shivaji

These were the Marathas living in the areas of what is now Maharashtra and Karnataka. They had good warriors who used to be enrolled in the armies of the Bijapur, Golconda and Mughal kingdoms.

Shahji Bhonsle was one of the Maratha chiefs who had many jagirs. He gave his jagir in Pune to his son Shivaji. Shivaji was a bold and courageous man and wondered why he should serve other kings. Why should he not build his own kingdom? From the young age of 18, he started collecting an army with the objective of setting up a separate kingdom of the Marathas.

He would attack the forts of the zamindars nearby and plunder them. Slowly, he captured many forts.

As Mughal rule spread in southern India, Shivaji also had to fight the Mughal army. On the strength of his small army, Shivaji defeated the huge and mighty armies of the Mughals many times.

He had a unique way of fighting against large armies. Instead of just engaging the enemy in a direct battle, he would attack suddenly, damage them and then withdraw quickly to hide in the hills. His small army could move swiftly from one place to another, while the immense Mughal army would lumber along more slowly. With repeated sudden small attacks, Shivaji would tire the Mughal army and then finally defeat it in a direct battle. This way of fighting is known as guerrilla warfare.

The Maratha Kingdom

Shivaji was successful in establishing his kingdom in Maharashtra. But in order to enlarge it, he had to keep attacking other neighbouring kingdoms. He needed to maintain a powerful army and for this it was necessary to have money. He organised a system for collecting taxes from the peasants in his kingdom. In order to mobilise more funds, he extracted money from the peasants and traders of other kingdoms as well. He demanded that the people of other kingdoms pay him one-fourth of the tax they paid to their own king. This tax was known as the 'chauth' (चाउथ). People of many villages and towns in other kingdoms were compelled to pay chauth for they feared the attacks of the Maratha soldiers. Those who did not pay the chauth had to face the attacks of Maratha soldiers each year.

The money collected from the chauth would be distributed among the Maratha generals or sardars. These sardars ruled over different parts of Shivaji's kingdom on his behalf.

Underline six important sentences about the Marathas.

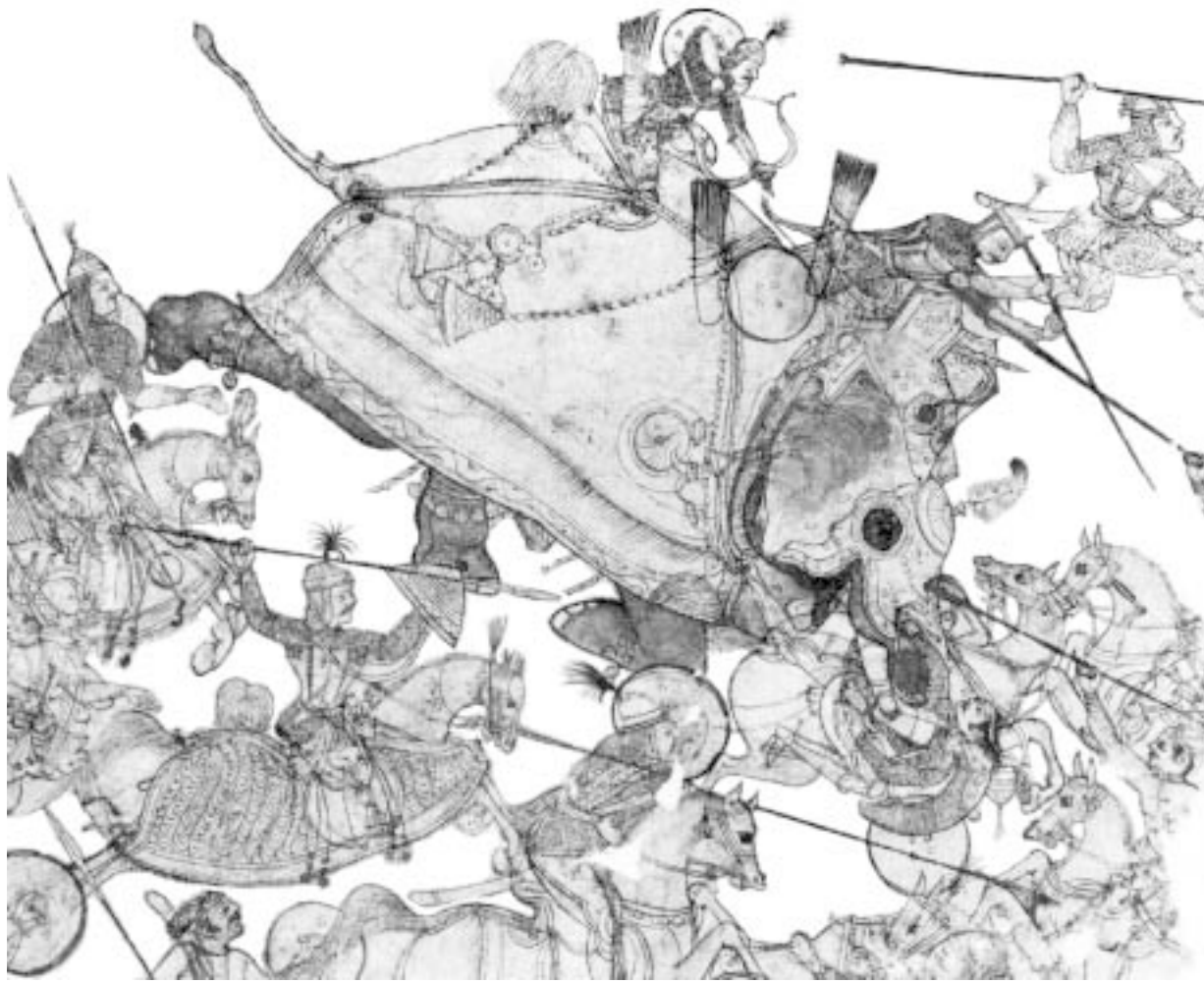
What was chauth?

- (a) tax that was taken from the peasants of one's own kingdom*
- (b) tax that was taken from the peasants of other kingdoms.*

List the problems that Aurangzeb was struggling with.

Crisis in the Mughal Empire and Aurangzeb's Policies

Ten years after he became the emperor, Aurangzeb issued an order to destroy all the temples that had recently been built, and allow only the older temples to remain standing. He also ordered the destruction of the temples where Muslims came to study Hinduism, so that they may not be able to do this any more. Thus during the reign of Aurangzeb many temples were razed to the ground.



In 1679, twenty-one years after he became the emperor, Aurangzeb reimposed the *jeziya* on the Hindus. Peasants, traders and craftsmen strongly opposed this.

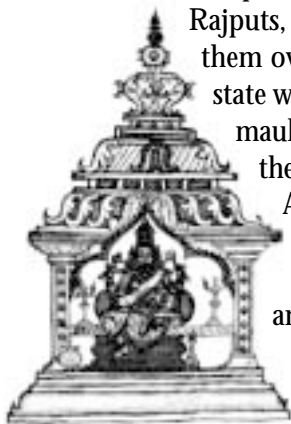
Many of his amirs, including Muslim amirs, were not happy with these policies of Aurangzeb. From time to time they would try to persuade Aurangzeb that his religious policy would not be good for the empire. Among the more prominent of Aurangzeb's amirs was Mahabat Khan. He wrote a letter to the emperor expressing his opposition. In it he wrote that the policies of Aurangzeb were good neither for religion nor for the empire.

However, Aurangzeb refused to budge. It was only after his death that the *jeziya* was again removed.

What could have been the reason behind Aurangzeb's policy? Some historians say that he was a fanatic and this is why he destroyed temples and imposed the *jeziya*. But if this was really so, why did he not take these steps as soon as he became the emperor? Why was it that he felt the need to adopt such rigid policies against the Hindus only 10-20 years after he had already been on the throne?

With the passage of time Aurangzeb was slowly getting overwhelmed by problems. You have come to know of these problems in the beginning of the chapter itself. Rebellions in many places, the scarcity of jagirs, discontent among the amirs, trouble from the Marathas - all these were problems that Aurangzeb was having difficulty solving.

In this time of crisis, Aurangzeb made attempts to get support and cooperation from as many people in his empire as possible. The Marathas, the Rajputs, the Muslims - he tried to win all of them over to his side. Many people in the state were orthodox Muslims - such as the maulvis, some amirs and others. To win them over during this critical period, Aurangzeb decided to take some steps against the Hindus. Perhaps that's why he reimposed the *jeziya* and had temples destroyed.



But he also needed the support of the Hindus. In particular, he wanted the Marathas and the Rajputs to be with him. He gave positions in his government to a large number of Marathas. He also did a lot to promote the Rajput amirs. He gave them important positions in the empire. Raja Jai Singh and Maharaja Jaswant Singh were among his closest advisers. Throughout Aurangzeb's reign the number of Hindu amirs kept increasing. During Akbar's time there were in all 22 Hindu amirs, in the time of Shah Jahan 98, whereas in the time of Aurangzeb there were 182 Hindu amirs who remained with him despite his religious policies.

Perhaps for similar political reasons, Aurangzeb also donated money and land to many temples and Hindu monasteries. Firmans of such donations can be seen even today in the Mahakal temple of Ujjain and the Ram temple of Chitrakoot.

Do you see any similarity between Akbar and Aurangzeb? Explain.

The Crisis of Jagirs and the Break-up of the Mughal Empire

You read earlier that peasants were in great distress under Mughal rule and in many places they had started revolting. Fuelled by the desire to set up their own kingdoms, the zamindars had also begun rising up against the empire. Because of this resistance the jagirdars were not able to collect sufficient taxes. Thus, their income had started decreasing.

As their income decreased, they kept fewer cavalry. And, when they had fewer cavalry they were not able to suppress the rebellions of the zamindars.

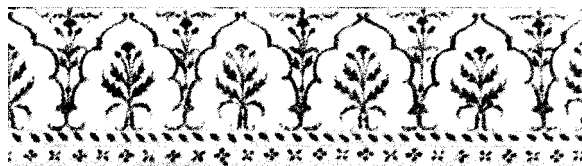
This was the case with those jagirdars who had jagirs to begin with. But there were many other amirs who were not getting their jagirs. Many of the amirs spent time trying to obtain a jagir somehow or the other, and that too in a place where they would not have to face the revolt of peasants and zamindars. To lay their hands on such

good jagirs the amirs started fighting each other. Once they got a jagir, the amirs would try to squeeze as much tax as they could from the peasants. They stopped following the rules and regulations of the emperor on tax collection.

As already mentioned, all the amirs were transferred once every two-three years. Whenever they were transferred their jagirs would be redistributed among others. But it would take a long time before they got new jagirs. For this reason the amirs would try to stay in one place and avoid being transferred. Even if the emperor transferred them they would refuse to move.

Thus, the amirs gradually began disobeying the orders of the emperor. Many subedars now began their own free rule in their subas. In this way, the subedars of Bengal, Avadh and Hyderabad broke free from Mughal rule.

Many of the zamindars who had revolted formed their own separate kingdoms. A separate Maratha kingdom was formed. The descendants of Raja Ram Jat established a separate kingdom in Bharatpur. The Sikhs of Punjab also formed their own kingdom. All these kingdoms considered themselves only nominally under the suzerainty of the Mughal emperor. Actually they had begun their own independent rule. Only in Delhi and its nearby areas did the word of the Mughal emperor hold real authority. Thus, the vast Mughal empire, which was once ruled by a single emperor, slowly crumbled and split into many smaller, independent kingdoms.

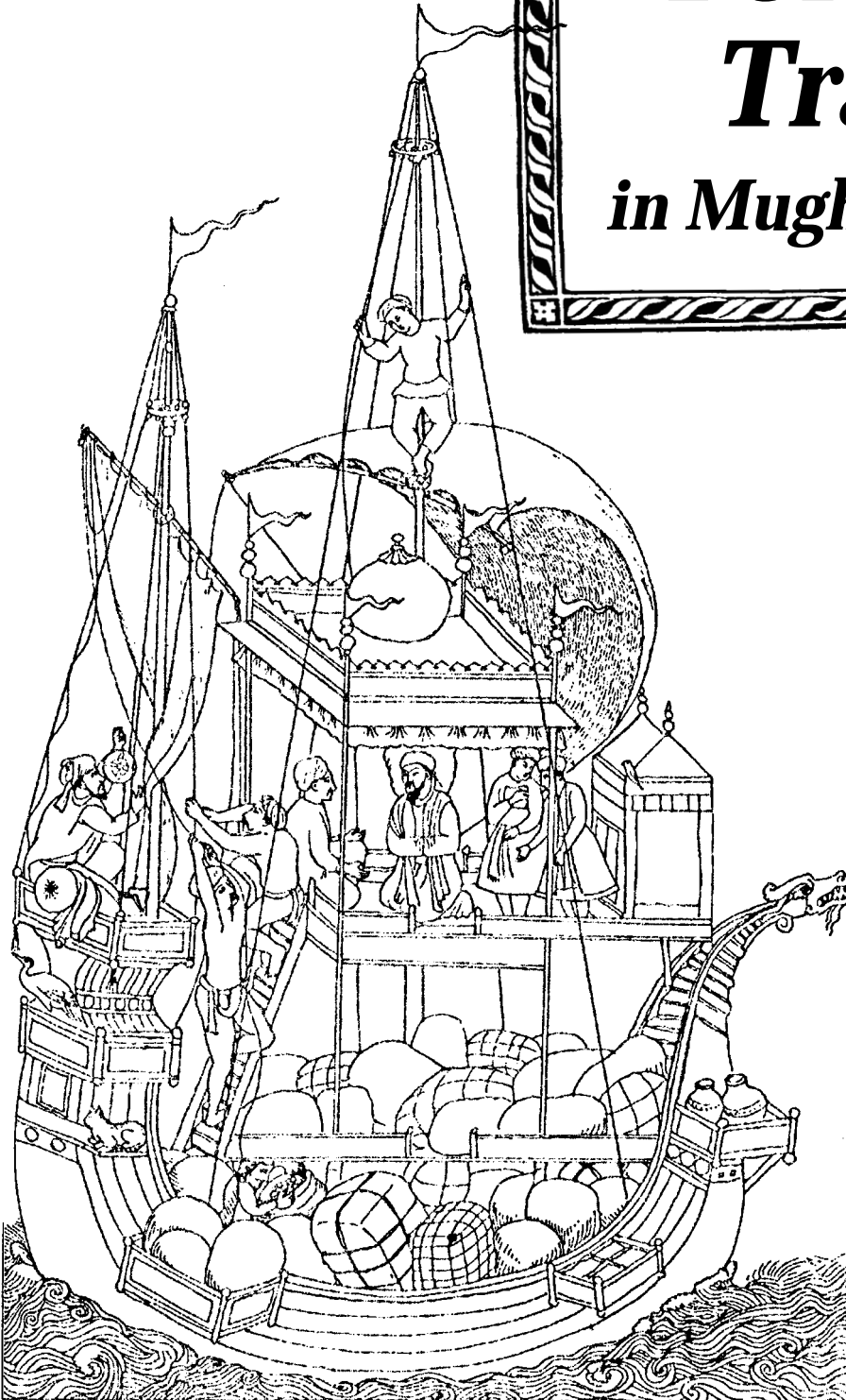


Exercises

- 1 *Aurangzeb faced two major problems - the revolt of the peasants and zamindars, and the shortage of jagirs. Explain these problems in a few sentences.*
- 2 *What steps did Aurangzeb take to solve the problem of scarcity of jagirs? Why were his solutions not successful?*
- 3 *How was Shivaji's small army able to defeat the Mughal army?*
- 4 *The income of Shivaji's kingdom came from many sources:*
 - (a) *Tax collected from the people of his own state.*
 - (b) _____
 - (c) _____
- 5 *Aurangzeb took some steps against the Hindus and some in their favour too. Give two examples of each.*
- 6 *State whether true or false:*
 - (a) *All the Muslims supported the steps that Aurangzeb took against the Hindus.*
 - (b) *Because of the steps that Aurangzeb took against the Hindus, the Hindu officials parted company with him.*
- 7 *Why and in what way did the jagirdars violate Aurangzeb's orders towards the end of his rule?*
- 8 *After the death of Aurangzeb the Mughal empire broke into many separate, independent kingdoms. Explain how and why this happened.*

Chapter 5

Foreign Trade in Mughal Times



Look at this picture of an Indian ship loaded with goods. Do you see the man with the circular instrument? He is the *muallim* of the ship and he has an **astrolabe** in his hand. He uses the astrolabe to measure the positions of the sun and stars, which helps him know the position of the ship. This ship moves by the force of the wind pushing against the sails. The sailors turn the sails in order to make the ship go in the direction the *muallims* says.

Look at the top of the ship: a man stands there looking in all directions and wondering: "Can any land or island be seen in this infinite sea? Can any other ship be seen?" The ship's owner and the trader are sitting in the middle, discussing among themselves.

The ship is loaded mainly with bales of cotton cloth. They have been purchased from Maslipatnam, a port on the eastern coast of India. They are being taken to the port of Surat. Many ports, such as Chennai, Cochin, Calicut and Goa, have been crossed on the way. The ship is now nearing Surat.

The entire cargo will be unloaded at Surat, where there will be traders from home and abroad. The cloth from this ship will be shown and sold to them.

In Mughal times a large number of traders from different places like Arabia, Iran, Indonesia, and from different parts of India, like Malabar (Kerala), Konkan (Maharashtra), Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Bengal, Delhi, Agra, etc. came to port towns like

Surat. From the 16th Century onwards traders from European countries also began coming to India in large numbers. These traders purchased goods produced in different places and exchanged them for products from other places and for gold and silver at Surat. Usually these goods could be bought at cheap prices from the people who produced them. For this reason some of the big traders of Gujarat had their offices and agents in the towns of Indonesia, in various parts of India, Arabia, and coastal Africa. The goods could then be sold at very high prices to traders from other places. In this way, the traders made huge profits.

Find each of the places mentioned above on a wall map or in your atlas.

Surat was the largest and most important port of the Mughal empire. Come, let's visit Surat.

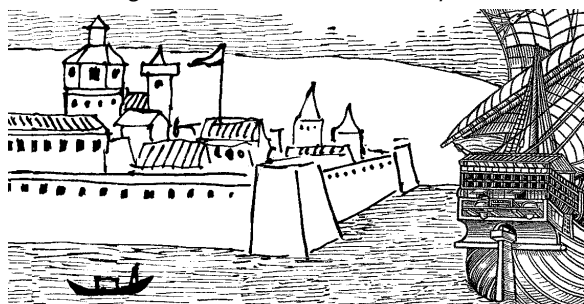
[The following account was taken from records written between 1650 and 1750 by Dutch traders from Holland.]

A Stroll around the Port of Surat

The city of Surat has been built at the place where the river Tapti meets the Arabian sea. Locate this area in a map.

Entering the Tapti from the sea we move towards Surat and come across many villages of fishing folk along the way. Then comes the village where the amirs of the Mughal kingdom have built a place for their ships to halt. It is here that ships lie during the monsoon, waiting for the weather to clear before they begin their voyages across the seas. Further up the river is the wharf for the ships of the richest trader of Surat, Mulla Abdul Gafoor. After that comes the wharf for the French ships, then the wharf for the ships from Turkey and finally the wharf for the ships from Holland.

After we cross these wharves we reach the city of Surat. In fact the wall of the fort of Surat runs along the bank of the river Tapti.



The Customs House

We sail past the fort and land at the royal customs house. Here traders pay the customs duty on their goods. There is a tax of 2.5% to 5% on all goods that are brought here for selling. For example, if there is a bale of cloth costing Rs. 100, the trader will have to pay the government somewhere between two and a half to five rupees in customs duty on it.

The Mughal emperor earns a large revenue from Surat. The more trade there is, the more customs duty he will get. Hence the Mughal emperors are keenly interested in promoting trade.

The Mint

Across the road from the customs house is the royal mint where coins are minted. Traders from foreign countries give gold and silver here and have coins of the Mughal Empire minted for themselves. It is with these coins that they

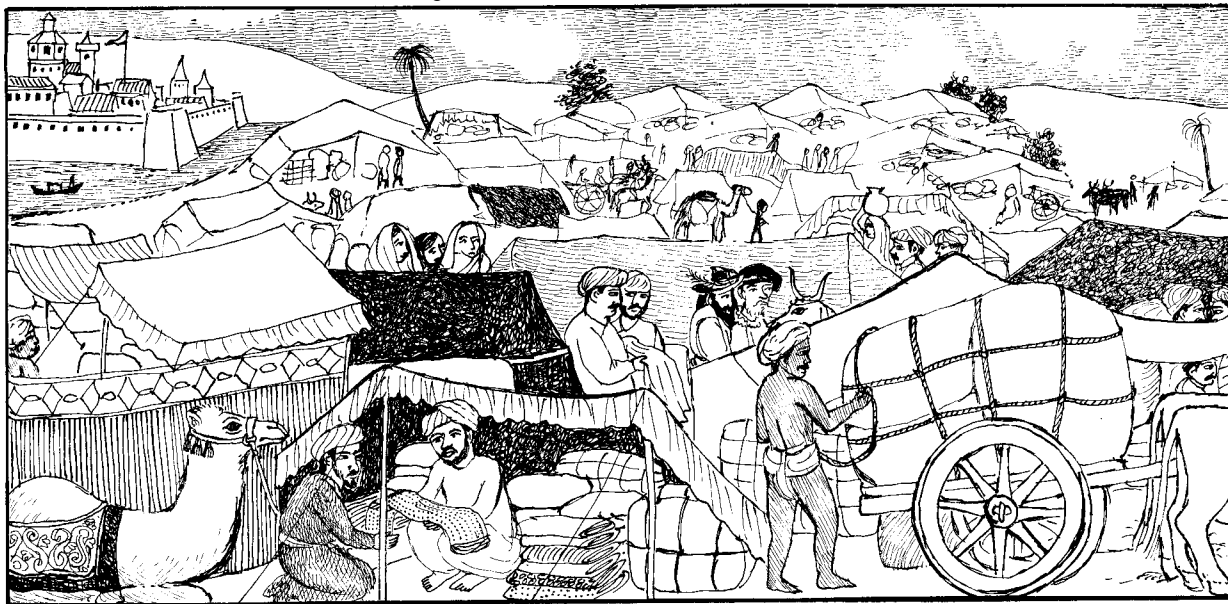
will purchase goods within the Mughal Empire. Adjacent to the mint is the *Dariya Mahal*, which is the residence of the high official in charge of the port.

The Bazaar in the Maidan

Now let us get to the large *maidan* sprawling behind these buildings. Resting in the shade to one side we see bullock carts, bullocks, camels and horses that have come in caravans from far away places. Bales of cloth, and sacks of indigo and sugar are being unloaded from the carts and moved to the trader's tents. As the sun goes up, more and more people can be seen purchasing goods.

Middlemen are also running all around. Traders from outside need the help of middlemen to buy goods and then resell them. After all it is the middlemen who know what goods are being sold where and at what rate. For each item there is a different middleman - someone is a middleman for cloth, another for sugar, someone else for indigo. In this bazaar the middlemen have plenty of clout.

A view of the maidan in Surat in Mughal times



In 1608 Emperor Jahangir gave the English permission to build this place to store their goods in Surat. Such places were then called 'factories'.

Look, the officials of the royal tax house can be seen there, out on a tour of the *maidan*. After examining the goods in each tent they put their stamp on them to let people know that taxes have been paid on those goods.

A Delayed Caravan

Standing near a caravan, a Gujarati trader, Lakshmidas scolds his man, Lalchand. Lalchand had bought indigo from Bayana, loaded it on a caravan of bullock-carts and brought it to Surat. But he got late by almost

20 days in reaching Surat and is very tired and hassled, only to hear his master scold him heavily.

Lalchand tries to explain, "It took time to hire the carts, Lakshmidasji! I kept making trips to the shop of Chaudhari Udayram at Agra. All his carts had gone out. Then a caravan of 20 carts returned from Lucknow. Only then did Udayram rent me the carts."

"Enough! Enough of your tales," the master Lakshmidas growled. His goods had come late, so everyone had already bought indigo from other sellers, and that too at very high prices. He knew that he would not be able to get high prices now. "Arrey, why couldn't you send me the news through post? The house of the *qasidas* is right next to the house of Udayram. If you had sent an urgent *harkara* (letter), it would have been here in twenty days. So what if the *harkara* had cost a lot, at least I would have gotten to know that the goods are on their way. I would have gone ahead and fixed a deal."

The same story might sound different when it is told from different points of view.

(a) Suppose you are Lalchand. Write how you might tell your friends about this trip from Bayana to Surat.

(b) Now suppose you are Lakshmidas. Write how you might tell your trader friends why your indigo was late in coming to Surat.



An abandoned sarai still exists at Shambhu, Punjab.

A Journey from Agra to Surat

Come, let us move towards the camp of some Dutch traders. These people have travelled the long route from Agra to Surat, passing Gwalior, Sironj, Ujjain and Burhanpur on the way. They are telling others how after each long day's trudge in the dust and wind they had found shelter in the *sarai* of some town for the night - and once when the *sarai* was fully occupied they had to pass the night in a mango grove. They are also telling how the Mughal authorities have constructed good bridges over nullahs and rivers, thus making the journey easier. But the fear of dacoits haunted them all along their route, forcing them to change the route twice, which made them late by a few days in getting to Surat.

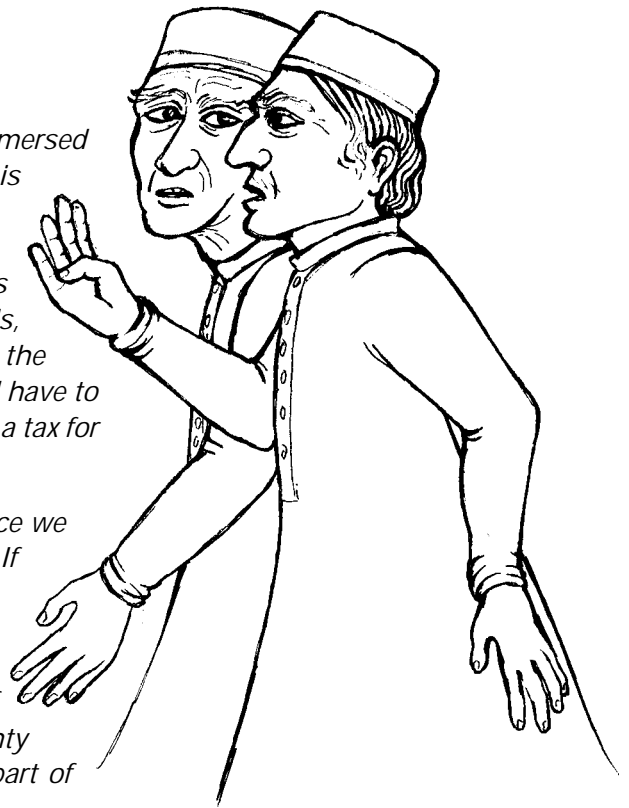


A caravan of traders resting, painted in Mughal times

A Toll Here and a Tax There

Suddenly we are elbowed aside as the Parsi traders, immersed in their talk, march ahead at great speed. One of them is counting on his finger as he says, "Every time you move out of a town, you have to pay a toll. Then you have to pay taxes for the road, taxes for the *saraïs* and the bridges - you even have to pay a grazing tax because the camels, oxen and horses pulling your carts graze grass along the way! And even then, sir, it isn't quite the end - now we'll have to pay taxes for boats, a tax for making use of the port, and a tax for selling our goods!"

"We'll pay all these taxes to the Mughal Empire and once we are on the sea, the Portuguese Empire will take over. If we don't purchase a trade 'pass' from them, our ships will be looted. So the Portuguese have to be paid without a murmur. Pay this, pay that, it's surprising that we have anything left at all." With a guffaw of laughter they move ahead - obviously they do have plenty left over. Our attention moves from them to another part of the *maidan* where there seems to be a stampede.



A Stampede for Labourers

Arrey, arrey, two traders have clashed over labourers!

"I'm the one who's hired them!"

"No, I've hired them."

Yes, now that it's the month of November and the monsoon is over, the ships have to be loaded as quickly as possible to cross the seas. There is a virtual stampede for labourers to do the loading.

The Clout of Abdul Gafoor

The *qazi*, that is the judge of Surat, is quite troubled over this problem of labourers. Let's find out what's going on.

When we ask, we find out that the chief of the boatmen, Fakir Muhammad, had gone with 40 men of his clan to the biggest merchant of Surat, Abdul Gafoor, to ask for work. Abdul Gafoor's ship was being readied for a voyage to the Red Sea. He hired Fakir Muhammad and his men. The terms of the job were as follows: the chief would get Rs 10 per month and 2 maunds of rice, 8 sers of ghee, and 1 maund *dal*; the other *malla*hs would get Rs 5 per month, 1 maund rice, half a maund of *dal* and 4 sers of ghee. They would all work on the ship of Abdul Gafoor for two years.

But in addition to these terms there was another condition as well, and the *qazi* starts in surprise when he hears of it. Abdul Gafoor had told the *malla*hs that they would have to protect his ship while at sea. If pirates loot the ship and they are unable to save it, then their homes, possessions and families at Surat would all be handed over to him. The *malla*hs had agreed to this condition also.



The agreement between the ship owner and the sailors had to be registered with the *qazi* of the city. When the *qazi* read the last condition he said to the *mallahs* "Arrey, what kind of foolish step are you taking! If you are unable to save the ship your wives and children will become the slaves of Abdul Gafoor." Fakir Muhammad said, "Sahib, we're poor and helpless. What can we do?" The *qazi* said, "If you are poor, does it mean that you will do something foolish?" He refused to register such an unjust and unfair agreement. But eventually what Abdul Gafoor wanted, happened - the next day the sailors went and took charge of the ship under the same conditions.

So in this way, amid sorrow and pain, anger and guffaws, trading continues at Surat. At last all the preparations have been made and the ships set sail.

You have just read about transport, posts, travel, taxation during the times of the Mughals. How are these similar to the experiences of the traders of today - discuss.

What terms of the agreement between Abdul Gafoor and the sailors were found unjust by the qazi and what was his response?

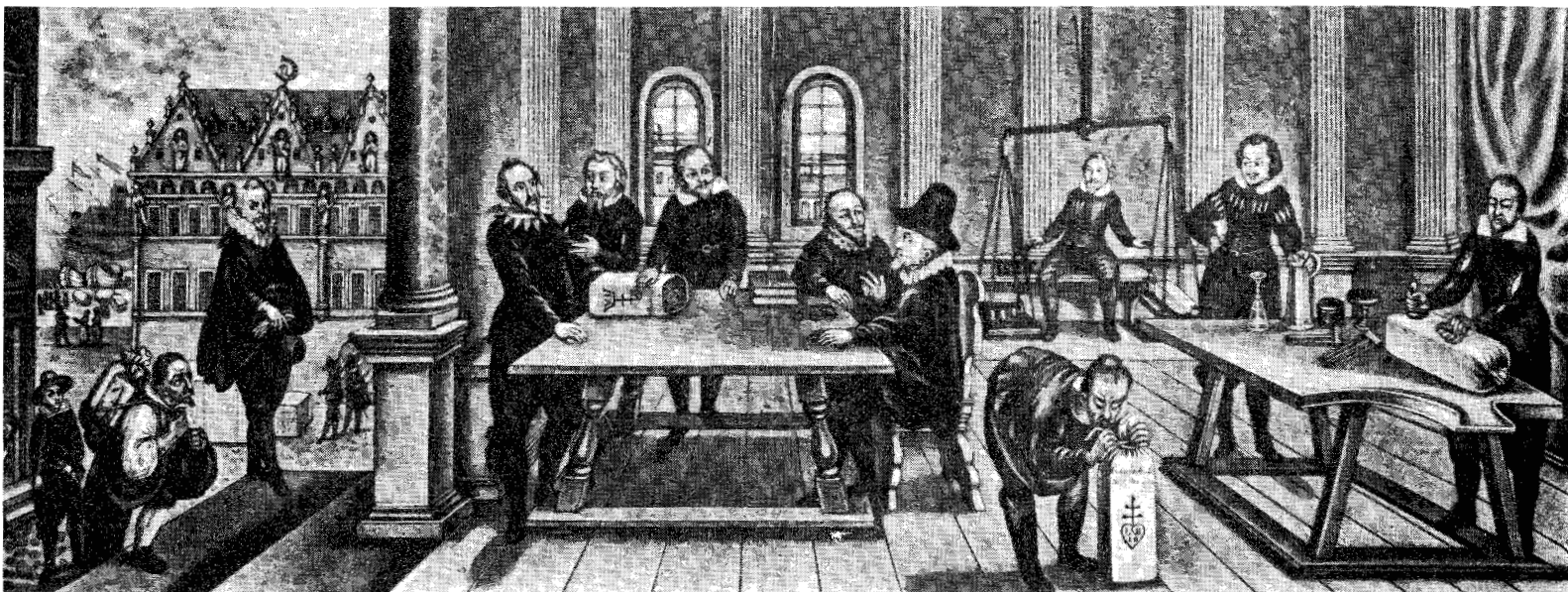
How would you explain the action of the sailors in the end? How would you explain the action of Abdul Gafoor?

These were the sounds and sights in the city of Surat. Here, you saw merchants coming from home and abroad. Merchants from Europe, Arabia, Iran, China, Indonesia and many parts of India would trade here.

Goods from Asia reaching Europe

After a number of long journeys, saffron and other spices from Asia reach a trading centre in Germany

Look at this picture and try to identify what the different people are doing, starting from left to right.



Trade in South Asia

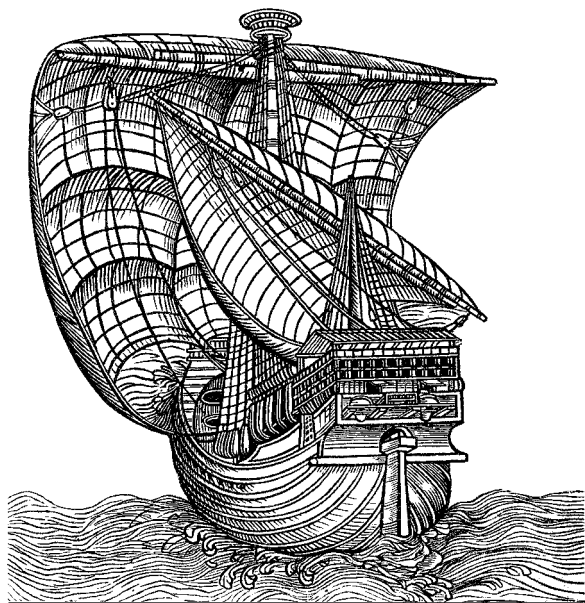
Now let's take a closer look at how and why sea trade was carried on and how it changed during the Mughal period.

Wind direction and sea voyages

Traders transported bulky goods in ships. They also transported goods through caravans along land routes. However, carrying goods over high mountains, rivers and deserts took a long time and was very expensive. Hence traders preferred to use sea routes.

In those days the ships relied on wind to travel. The wind blows in certain fixed directions in the seas around India. From April to September the winds blow one way. And from December to March they blow another way.

After around 1850 big ships were powered by steam produced by burning coal. Since around 1920 they have been powered by diesel.



Look at the maps showing wind direction at these two times of the year and answer the following questions:

When did ships sail from Surat to Mozambique?

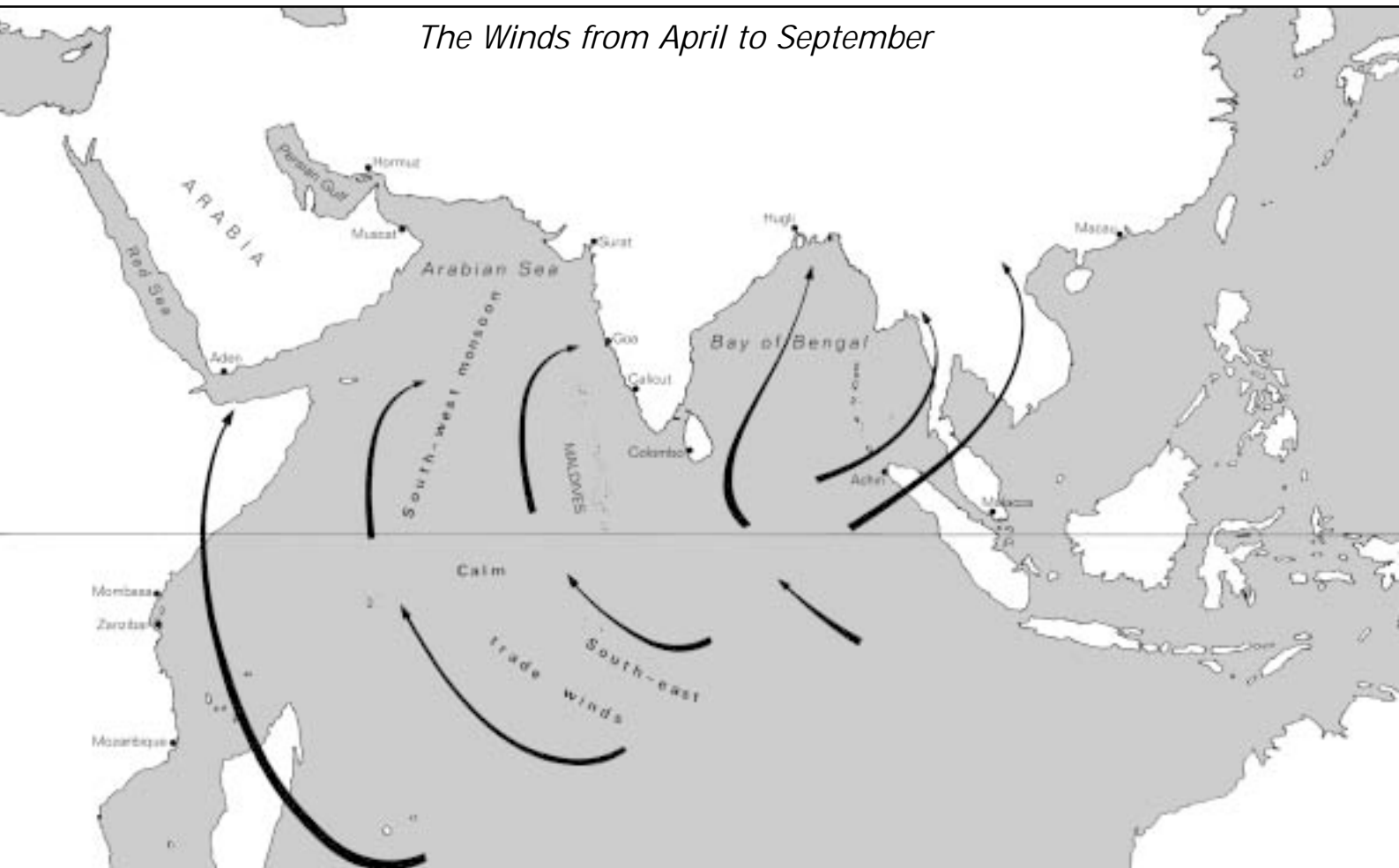
When did ships sail from Maldives to Goa?

When did ships sail from Hugli to Colombo?

Why didn't ships sail from Calicut to Zanzibar in July?

Look at a globe and try to find routes ships might have taken to travel between Europe and India.

The Winds from April to September





The Winds from December to March

From June to July ships from Arabia and eastern Africa would come to the western coast of India, to buy cloth, spices, and other things in exchange for gold and silver. In the same months, ships would go from the eastern coast of India towards Indonesia.

In Indonesia, the merchants would sell cloth from India and purchase spices such as cloves, cinnamon, black pepper, cardamom, etc. In October and November the direction of the wind would change, and it would blow the ships back to India, and then on to Arabia or eastern Africa.

The Coming of European Traders

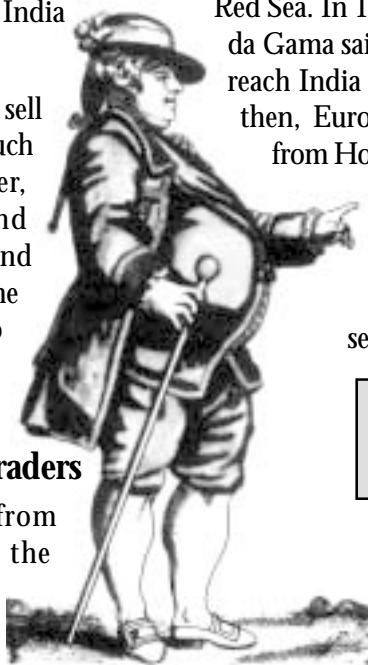
Before the Mughal times, ships from Europe (especially Italy) crossed the Mediterranean Sea to buy Indian

cloth and spices from Arabian traders. These goods would be sold at a great profit in Europe. In order to trade directly with India, European traders would have had to travel overland to reach the Red Sea. In 1492 a Portuguese sailor called Vasco da Gama sailed round the tip of South Africa to reach India by sea. Since then, European traders from Holland, France and England started coming to India by this sea route.

Since 1869 the Suez Canal has connected the Mediterranean and the Red Sea

Why do you think cotton and spices fetched high prices in Europe?

The traders wanted to get rich by buying and selling as they travelled from place to place.



For example, merchants might have brought gold and silver from Europe and Africa and bought silk and cotton in Surat, which they would sell in the Malabar coast and Indonesia. From the profit, they would buy spices. These spices would be taken to Europe and sold at very high prices. In the process the merchants made a 20-30 fold profit.

The Portuguese Come to Rule the Indian Ocean

People from many parts of the world greedily eyed the trade in the Indian Ocean.

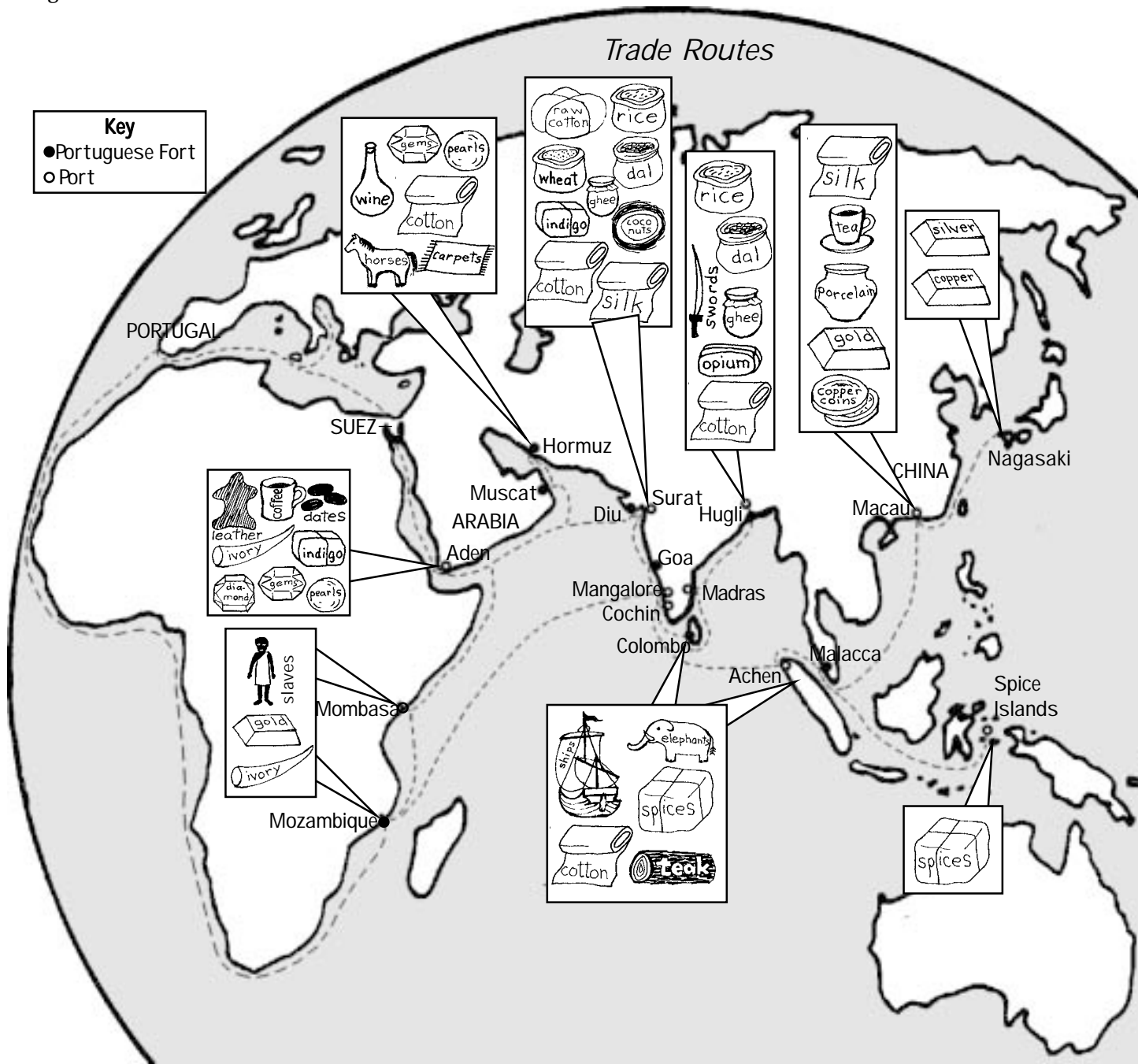
Look at the map and find out which goods were being traded in the continents around the Indian

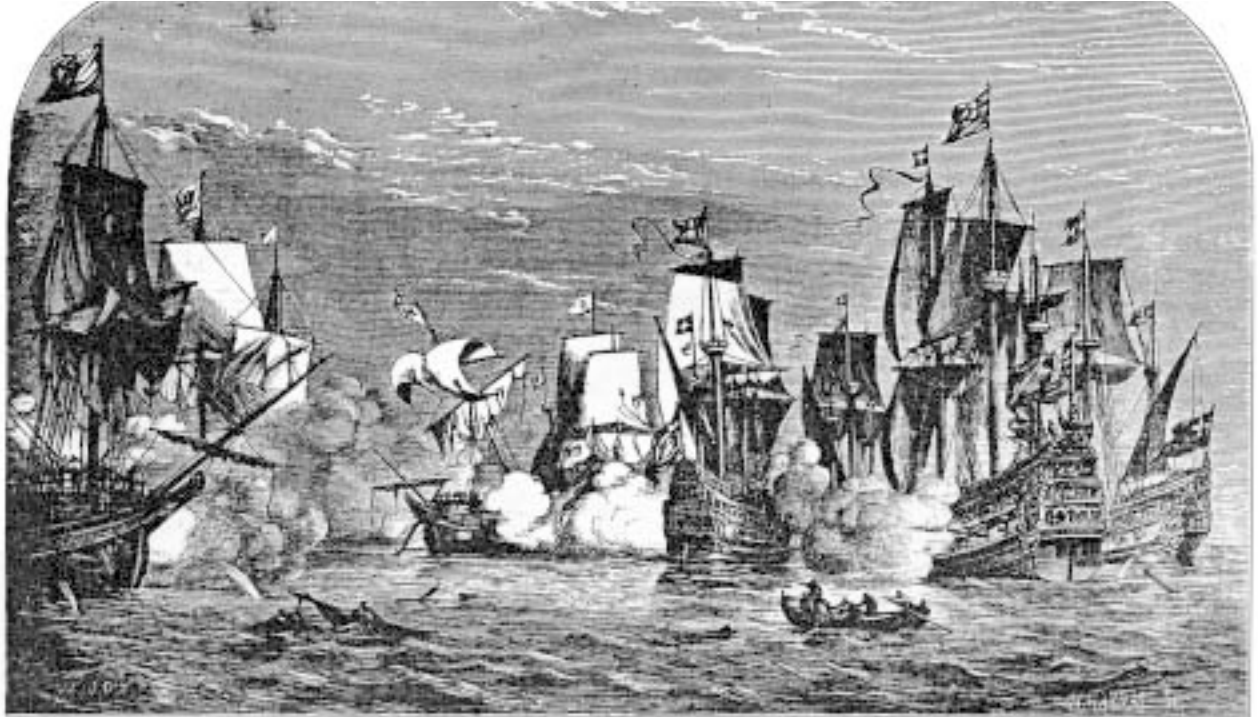
Ocean. The map also shows the main routes that ships took. Notice how India lies in between the trade routes connecting different places.

Which were the ports that served the ships on their routes?

*How might silk from China finally reach Europe?
Through which ports might it pass along the way?*

Merchants were getting rich by trading over these routes. If someone could take control of the ports and the routes, all the trade could go into their hands.





A fight between Portuguese and English ships near Surat in 1612

Many countries of Europe - France, England, Holland, Portugal etc. - tried to establish their control over the trade in the Indian Ocean. This was not easy. It wasn't until around 1600 that the Portuguese were finally able to exert their control over the sea routes.

Look at the map. The Portuguese captured many places on the coasts of the Indian ocean and built their fortresses there. From these fortresses they were able to keep watch over all the routes on which ships plied.

In this way the Portuguese established their empire over the Indian Ocean. An empire over water? Yes. They declared that only Portuguese ships could trade in this ocean. Other traders could not bring their ships into this ocean without their permission. Hefty payments had to be made to purchase 'passes' from the Portuguese.

The Portuguese were able to do this because they had a strong navy. An army is not only made up of foot-soldiers and elephants and horses that move on the ground. There are also armies on the sea - ready to fight from ships armed with guns and cannons.

Every now and then the ships of Arabs, Gujaratis and others who challenged them were looted by the Portuguese navy or sunk in artillery attacks! The Portuguese navy also destroyed ports in which

the goods of other merchants were loaded and unloaded. For many years no one had a navy to match theirs. The Mughals and other rulers of this time were more interested in building powerful land armies than navies. Thus, the Mughals were able to prevent the Portuguese from challenging their authority on land.

Dutch rule over Indonesia

Other European powers gradually succeeded in challenging the Portuguese on sea. The Dutch (from Holland) fought with the Portuguese. By the 1620's they established their own rule over Indonesia and thus came to control the trade in the spices that grew there.

European merchants try to control India

Traders from other European countries kept trying to snatch the trade in India from the hands of the Portuguese. Gradually the Portuguese navy and forts grew weak. After this, several European countries fought among themselves to capture the trade with India, but for many years no country could emerge as the winner.

Traders from Europe were constantly engaged in efforts to purchase goods from India at as low a

price as possible. Then they could sell these goods at very high prices in Europe and earn great profits. They found that the goods brought by traders for sale to ports such as Surat and Masulipatnam were being sold at high prices. European merchants tried to send their own men or agents deep into villages to buy goods directly from the craftsmen so that the goods would be available at cheaper rates.

In bringing goods from villages, their men had to pay many taxes to the Mughals, which the European traders resented. Much money was spent in paying them and the cost of the goods went up. You can understand this issue better by discussing it with your teacher.

European merchants tried many ways to solve the problem of paying high taxes. They would send their envoys to the courts of Indian rulers and ask for full freedom to trade in India and get exemptions from taxes. In return for this they would make several valuable gifts to the rulers. Many a time they would get the desired

concessions. The rulers would often give them some tax concessions in the hope of attracting more trade, which would ultimately bring them more taxes.

Besides, the Indian kings were also under the influence of threats from the European traders. The Indian ships needed their protection from the attack of the Portuguese. The English, the French and the Dutch would say, "Only if you give concessions in trade will we give a guarantee on your ships. Otherwise, we cannot guarantee that they won't be looted and sunk at sea."

Underline five important sentences about how the European countries tried to establish their control over trade in India.

As a result of the circumstances described here, the merchants of Europe reaped huge profits. They got exemptions from many taxes. They bought land to build their own godowns, houses, ports and even their own fortresses. In the next chapter, you will read how these merchants went on to establish their rule in India.

Exercises

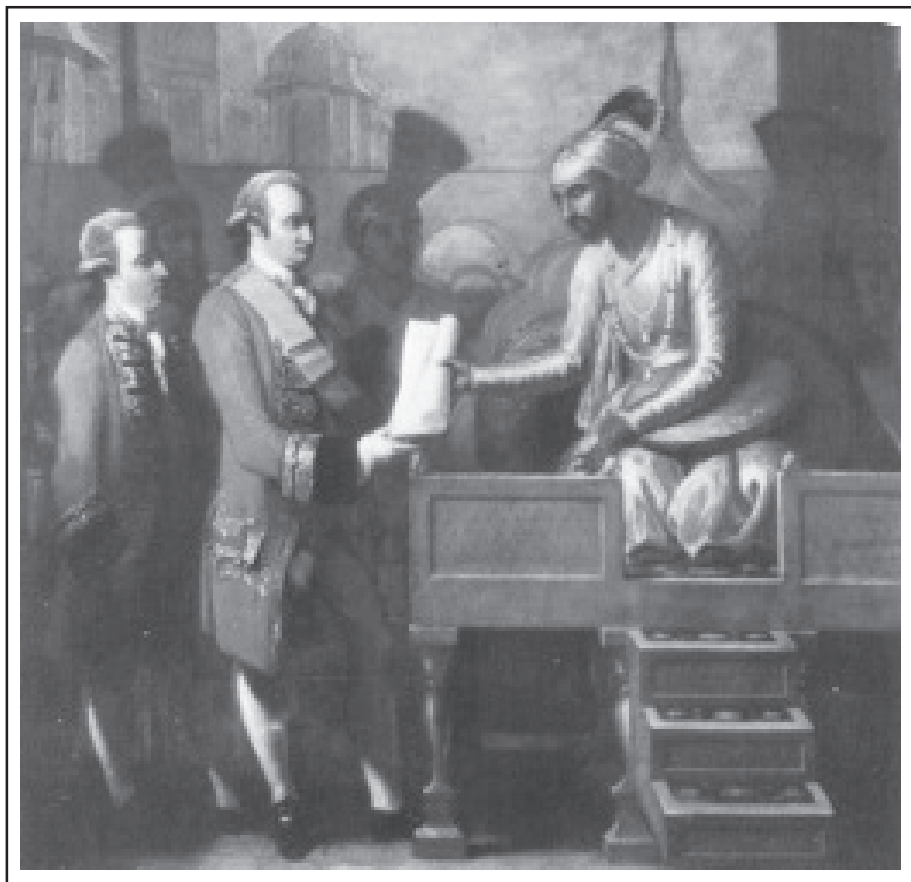
1. *Why would the European merchants stop over at the ports of Africa and India on their way to Indonesia to buy spices?*
2. *What facilities were available to traders if they wanted to transport goods from one place to another in Mughal times?*
3. *During the Mughal period, what was the system for sending messages through post?*
4. *What did sailors get in return for working on ships?*
5. *How did the Portuguese establish their rule over the Indian Ocean? What advantage did they get from this control?*
6. *Tell two different things that a trader who bought spices in Indonesia might do with them.*
7. *What kind of concessions did Indian rulers give to European traders? What were the reasons for giving such concessions?*



A woman from the Deccan and her husband, a trader

HISTORY

The English Rule India



A module from the book
Social Studies

AN EKLAVYA PUBLICATION



HISTORY

The English Rule India

A module from the book **SOCIAL STUDIES - Class 8**

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CHAPTER 1

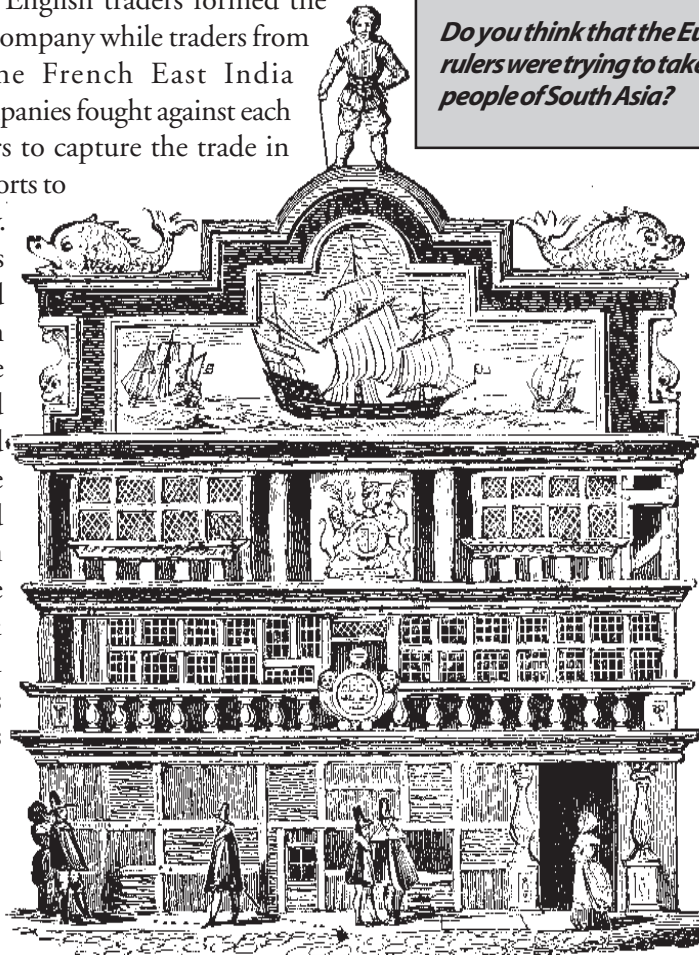
The English Establish their Rule over India

You may have heard people saying that the English came to India to trade, then conquered the country and set up their empire.

Let's understand how this happened.

Armed Traders

European traders formed their own companies to trade in India. The English traders formed the English East India Company while traders from France formed the French East India Company. Both companies fought against each other for many years to capture the trade in India. Each made efforts to drive the other away. They brought armies from England and France to help them in their fight. The kings of England and France also backed their respective companies and helped them in many ways. The companies acquired land in India and built their own forts to wage battles against each other.



Why did the European companies trade in India?

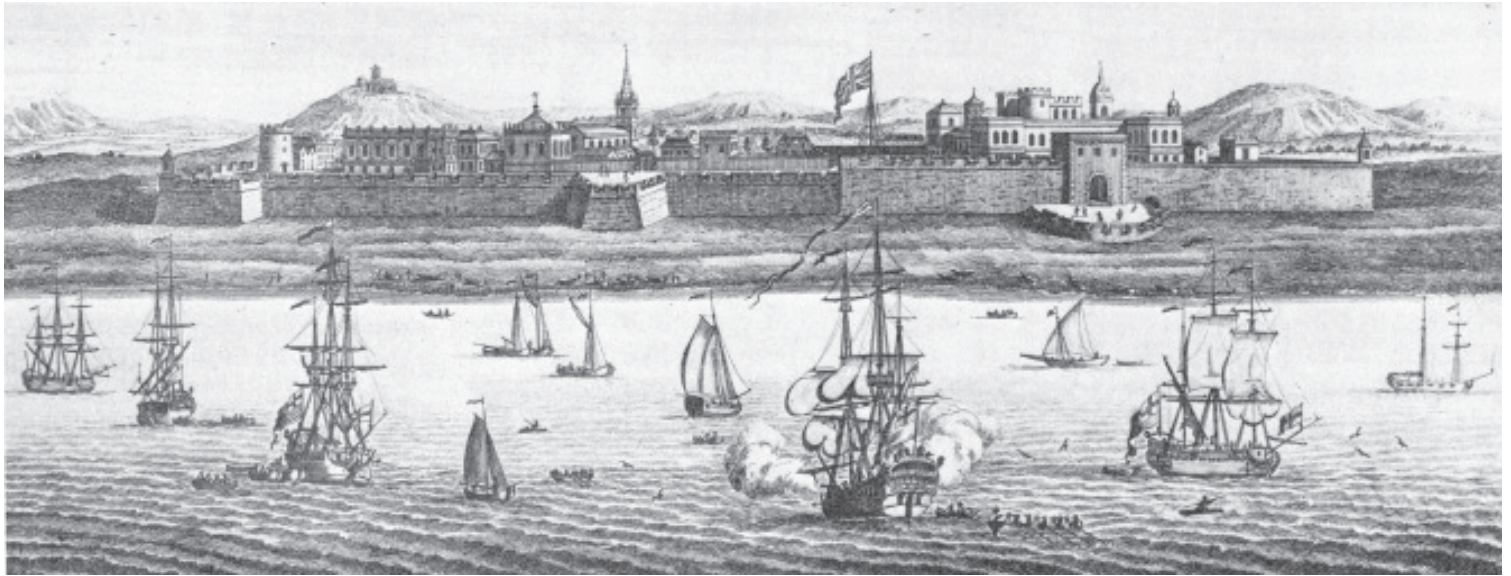
What risks do you think the European traders might have faced in trading with India? What did they do to earn more profit?

Discuss and share your experience of present day traders and how they try to prevent losses and make gains.

Do you think that the European companies and rulers were trying to take unfair advantage of the people of South Asia?

The wealth that was accumulated in this way was one of the most important factors that enabled England to begin developing industries and establishing their dominance in the world.

The headquarters of the East India Company in London.



The harbour at Chennai with a fort built by the English

This was the time when England as well as some other European countries, like Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, and Germany were acquiring colonies in North and South America, Africa, and Asia. The colonies contributed to the power and wealth of these European countries.

The Mughal emperors as well as many rajas and nawabs began to realise how dangerous it was to let such traders maintain armies, build forts, fight battles and use military force to establish their economic power in their kingdoms.

Can you explain what kind of danger these rulers saw in all this?

As long as the Mughal empire was strong, it had not been possible for the European companies to establish their own military power in India. In

fact Emperors Shahjahan and Aurangzeb had fought and defeated the European companies on a number of occasions.

However once the Mughal empire broke up into small kingdoms. such as Avadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad, the companies found their chance to assert their power. Though the rajas and nawabs wanted more trade they tried to check the growing military strength of the companies.

For example, in 1764, Nawab Anwaruddin Khan of Karnataka sent his army to fight against the French company. However, to the astonishment of all, the small French army managed to defeat the large army of the nawab. Now a small European army had gotten the better of a large Indian army. The European traders became bolder after this victory and felt they could do whatever

they wanted in India because of the strength of their armies.



An English officer arrives in India around 1820

How were the European armies different from the armies of Indian rulers in the 1700's? The soldiers of European armies were better trained and received higher and more regular salaries. They

also had better cannons and guns. The European armies held parades and drills every day. With such regular exercise, Indian soldiers enrolled in these armies also became quite skilled in battle.

The English training Indian soldiers



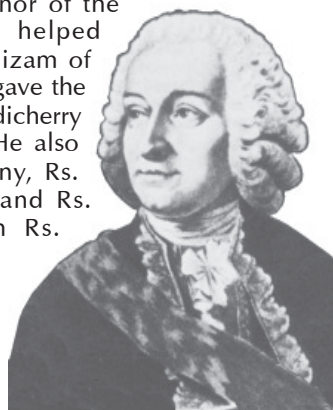
Growing European Interference in the Kingdoms of India

The companies used their military advantage to increase their profits from trade. On many occasions when they saw two Indian rulers fighting among themselves, they would take sides and get involved in the fight. They would lend their army to one side to help them defeat their rivals. But, in return, the companies would demand and extract many trade concessions from the rulers. The rulers also 'gifted' the companies large amounts of money in return for their military help. This money helped the companies increase their trade even more.

The companies also began to acquire small parts of kingdoms as 'gifts' from the local rulers. They would collect land tax from the villages and towns in these areas and use the money for their trading activities. They also used this money for maintaining and improving their army.

Slowly, the English company began emerging victorious over the French company in the struggle for dominance in India.

For example, Dupleix, a governor of the French East India Company, helped Muzaffar Jang to become the Nizam of Deccan. In return Muzaffar Jang gave the French some territories near Pondicherry and the town of Maslipatnam. He also gave Rs. 50,000 to the Company, Rs. 50,000 to the French troops, and Rs. 20,00,000 and a Jagir worth Rs. 1,00,000 per year to Dupleix.



Misuse of the Company's Power

The Indian rulers soon found that the burden of giving 'gifts' to the English East India Company and bearing the expenses of its army was becoming very heavy. They were also troubled by many other things the company was doing.

Some Indian rulers exempted the company from paying taxes on many of the goods it purchased from their kingdoms. However, people began taking advantage of these concessions. For example, employees of the company would do their own private trading. But they would show their own goods as belonging to the company to escape paying taxes. In this way, while the company got richer, its employees and officers also made a lot of money in India and returned home wealthy men. Many Indian traders and *seths* helped the company in its trade. They, too, showed their goods as belonging to the company to escape paying taxes.

Thus, there was much looting and swindling taking place in the kingdoms under the company. So proud was the company of its military strength

that it began working with great impudence. It forced craftsmen to sell their goods at low prices. In the areas it had acquired, the company tried to squeeze revenue from the peasants beyond reasonable limits. When the rulers protested against such practices, the English fought against them. They even went to the extent of dethroning kings and anointing successors who would be only too willing to remove any obstacles in the way of their trade.

Traders need money to buy the goods they sell to others. List three sources of money that helped the English to buy goods in India.

What advantages did the Indian rulers get from the English?

The English Impose their Rule

The English gradually began to feel that they could make fuller and freer use of India for trade if they themselves ruled the country. So they began removing the nawabs and rajas and ruling themselves.

In 1757, the English defeated Sirajuddaula, the Nawab of Bengal, at a place called Plassey and established their rule over Bengal. The Battle of Plassey is an important event in Indian history. After that, the English started conquering many of the kingdoms of India, big and small.

Many rajas and nawabs saw through the British plot and fought hard against them. They included Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore, the Maratha sardar Mahadji Scindia, Nana Phadnavis and others. But their kingdoms were small and, one by one, they lost to the English.



Tipu Sultan



In 1765 the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam granted Robert Clive the right to rule Bengal.

Among those who played an important role in the British success on the battlefield were generals Robert Clive, Warren Hastings and Lord Wellesley.

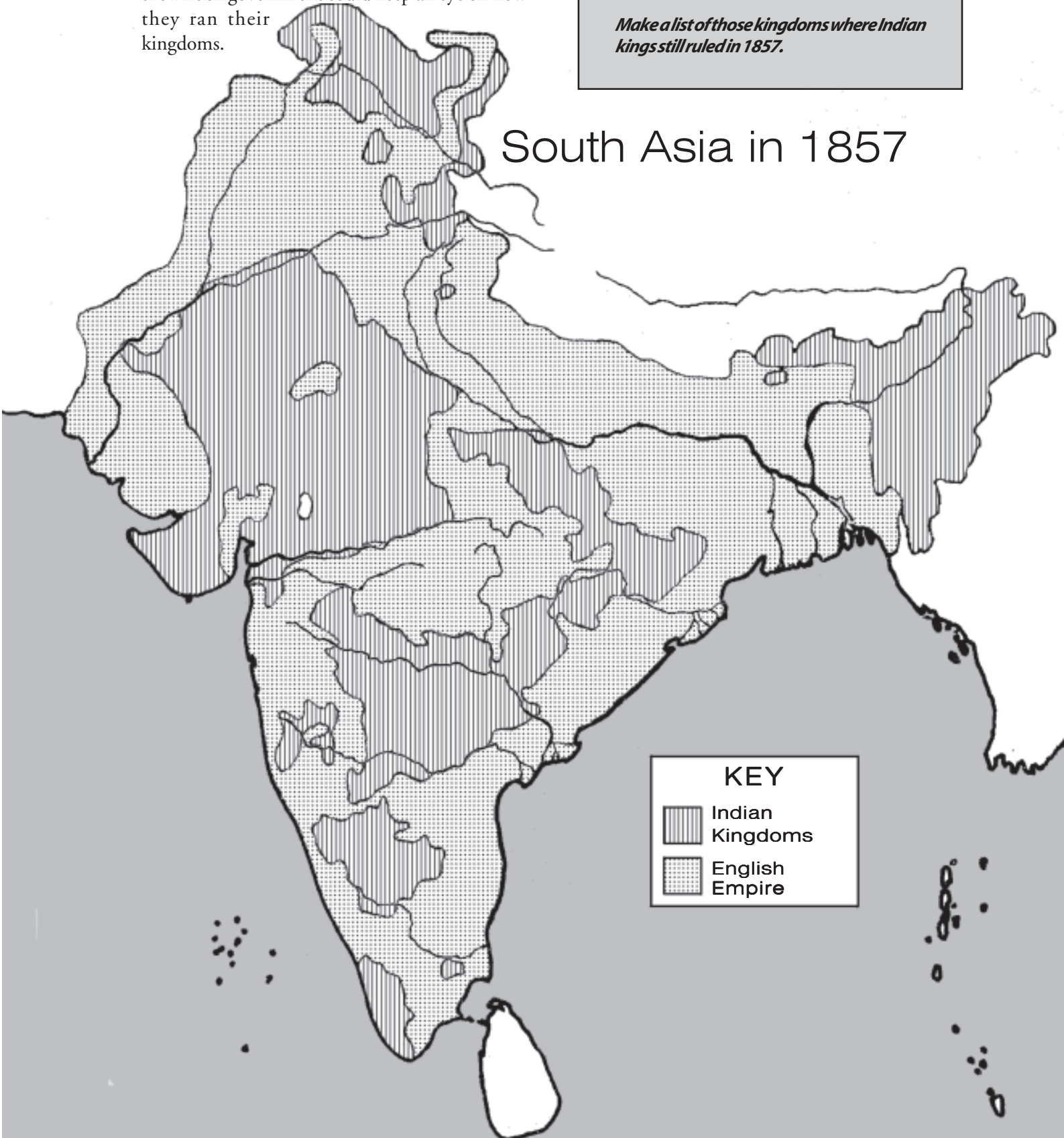
Slowly, large areas of India came under the direct rule of the English. In many places, the rajas and nawabs continued to rule, but they were under the sovereignty of the English. An English official (known as the 'resident') would be assigned to stay in the court of these kings or nawabs so that the British government could keep an eye on how they ran their kingdoms.

While carrying on trade with India, why did the English East India Company start thinking of establishing its rule over the country?

Look at the map. How far did English rule spread by 1857?

Make a list of those kingdoms where Indian kings still ruled in 1857.

South Asia in 1857



Discontent with English Rule

The English had to fight with many kings and nawabs to establish their rule. You will learn more about their policies and administration in later chapters. They constantly faced resistance from the people of India.

The royal families resisted them because the English would anoint or remove rulers as and when it suited their purposes.

Farmers and landowners resisted them because the English imposed very high taxes on them and collected the taxes very strictly. So they lived in constant fear of failing to pay the taxes and losing their lands as a result.

Tribal people also offered resistance, because of the new rules and laws the English began implementing. As a result, many tribal people lost their rights over jungles and land. You will read more about this in the later chapters.

Many Hindus and Muslims feared that the English would destroy their religions and convert them to Christianity.

The English faced their toughest battle in 1857 when, for a period of a few months, their rule was uprooted over almost the entire northern Indian region. This revolt was started by Indian *sipahis* or soldiers, who were soon joined by royal families, landowners, farmers, tribal people and craftsmen.

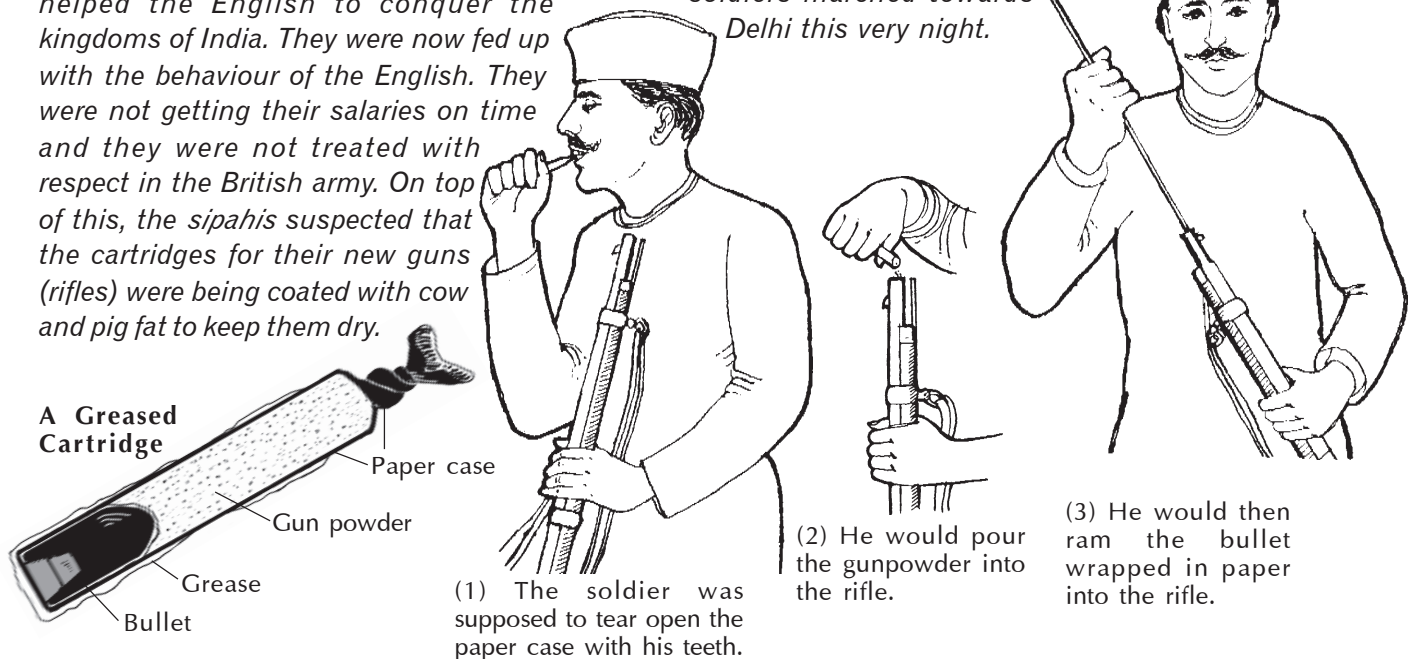
The Revolt of 1857

Place: *The military cantonment at Meerut, where the British army had camped*

Date: *Sunday, May 10, 1857*

The sun was about to set when the Indian soldiers began firing their guns on their English officers. These were the same soldiers who had helped the English to conquer the kingdoms of India. They were now fed up with the behaviour of the English. They were not getting their salaries on time and they were not treated with respect in the British army. On top of this, the *sipahis* suspected that the cartridges for their new guns (rifles) were being coated with cow and pig fat to keep them dry.

They felt that their religious faith was being violated. Based on this suspicion, a similar uprising had occurred at Barrackpur, near Kolkata in March 1857. The sense of discontent at Meerut was widespread and on this day the soldiers opened fire on their English officers. The rebellious soldiers marched towards Delhi this very night.



Indian soldiers
preparing for
attack



Place: Meerut town

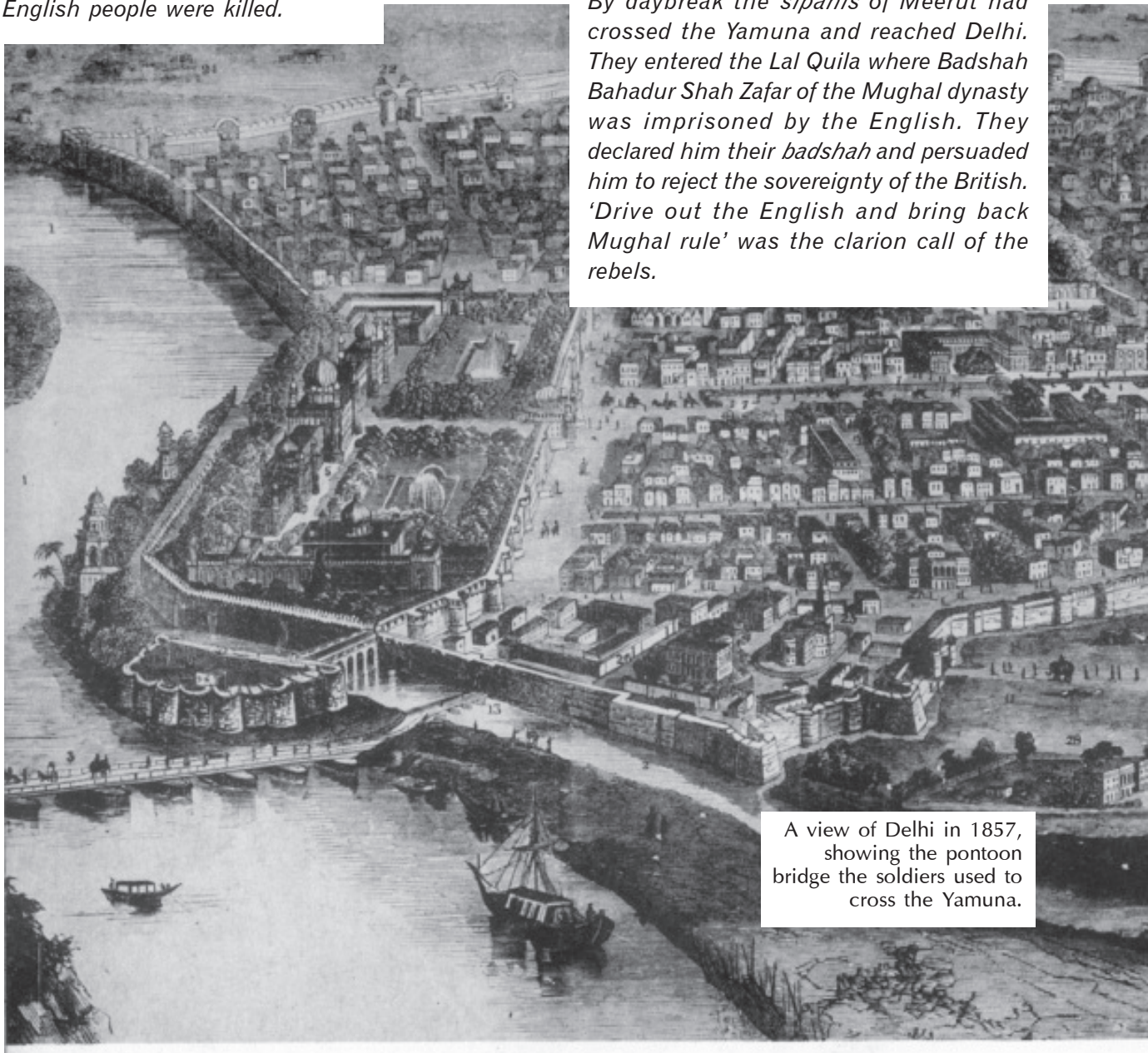
Date: Sunday night - Monday,
May 10-11, 1857

News of the sipahi revolt spread like wildfire in Meerut. The whole town was in ferment. A wave of people came from the bazaar and began attacking the bungalows of the English. Policemen joined the mobs and, before long, the bungalows and offices of the English were set afire. Many English people were killed.

Place: Delhi, the Lal Quila

Date: Monday, May 11, 1857

By daybreak the sipahis of Meerut had crossed the Yamuna and reached Delhi. They entered the Lal Quila where Badshah Bahadur Shah Zafar of the Mughal dynasty was imprisoned by the English. They declared him their badshah and persuaded him to reject the sovereignty of the British. 'Drive out the English and bring back Mughal rule' was the clarion call of the rebels.

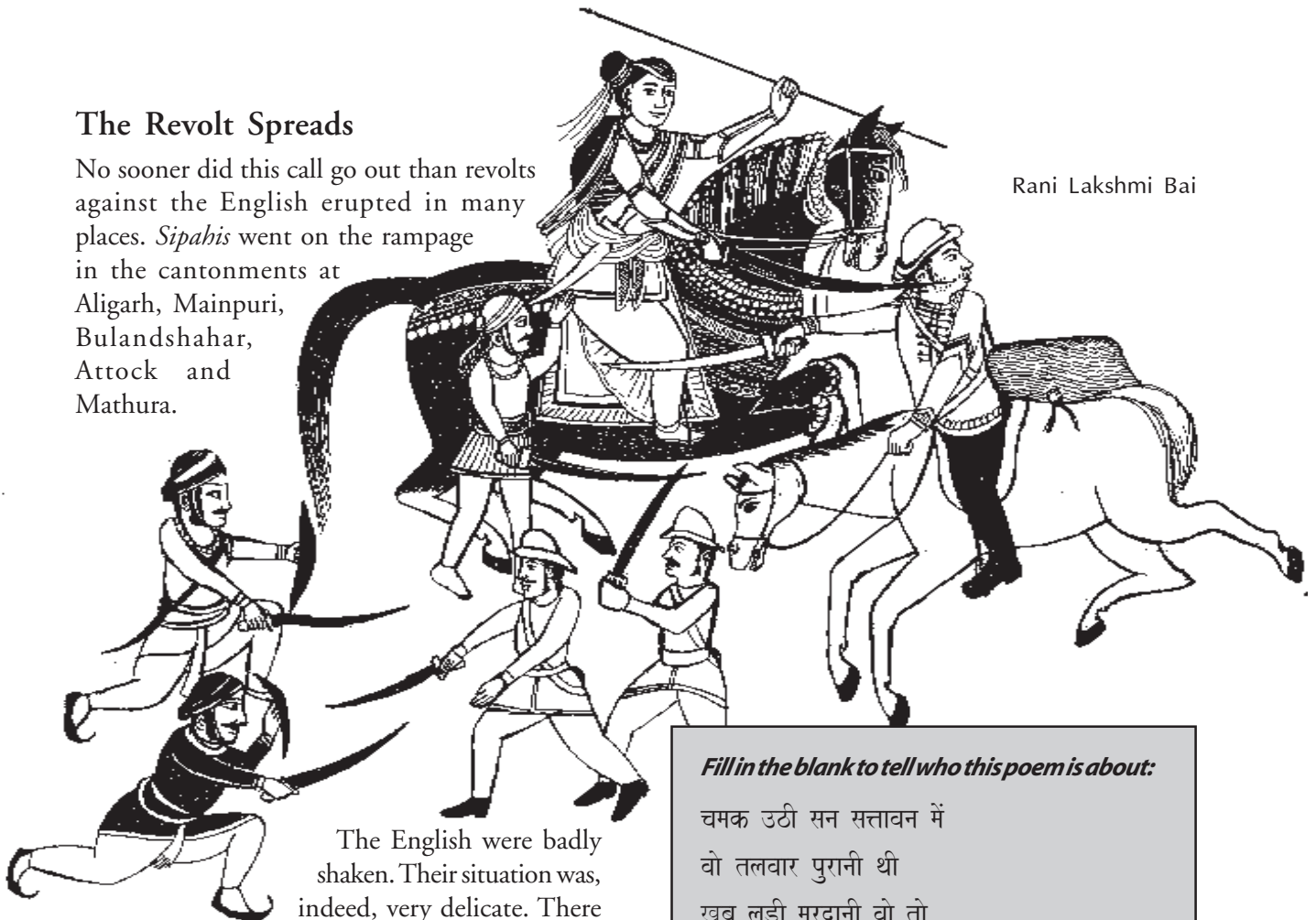


A view of Delhi in 1857,
showing the pontoon
bridge the soldiers used to
cross the Yamuna.

The Revolt Spreads

No sooner did this call go out than revolts against the English erupted in many places. *Sipahis* went on the rampage in the cantonments at Aligarh, Mainpuri, Bulandshahar, Attock and Mathura.

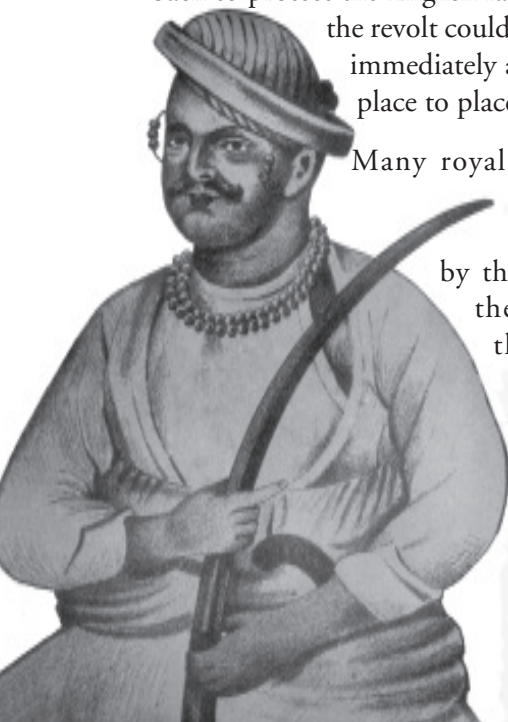
Rani Lakshmi Bai



The English were badly shaken. Their situation was, indeed, very delicate. There

were a mere 45,000 English officers and soldiers in India. Against this, the number of Indian soldiers in their army was two lakh and thirty two thousand! It was these very *sipahis* who revolted. So who would now protect the lives and property of the English residents in the towns? The Indian sections of their army could not be relied on. Consequently, many English soldiers were kept back to protect the English families. As a result, the revolt could not be suppressed immediately and it spread from place to place.

Many royal families, whose kingdoms had been taken away by the English, joined the revolt. Among them were the former Nawab of Avadh and the Maratha peshwa Nana Sahib.



Fill in the blank to tell who this poem is about:

चमक उठी सन सत्तावन में
वो तलवार पुरानी थी
खूब लड़ी मरदानी वो तो

थी

Armies of rebel sipahis and rulers from different corners of the country marched towards Delhi. Hope was in the air that the English would be driven away and Mughal rule and the earlier political order would be restored.

Discuss why the idea of the Mughal empire brought the rebelling Indian people together.

When you oppose something, you need an alternative in its place. Think of an example from your experience that brings out this need of an alternative.

Every Village in Revolt

The flames of revolt spread from *kasba* to *kasba* and village to village in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The peasants and *zamindars* took up arms together and had the English and their officers on the run. They stopped paying taxes to the British

government. They tore up railway lines, burnt down police stations, post and telegraph offices and courts and uprooted the telegraph wires. These were the new things the English had introduced in India. As defeat stared the English in their faces, the Indian people became more and more courageous in their fight against British rule.

The rebels looted the houses and burnt the documents of many moneylenders. These moneylenders had become very powerful in the villages with the help of English laws.

The Revolt is Suppressed

Despite the widespread success of the revolt, the English slowly gained control over the situation.

The rebels fought bravely. But there were two major weaknesses among them. In every town or region, different groups of rebels fought separately against the English. They did not fight together. There was no combined and well-planned effort. So the English were able to tackle the rebels one by one in each area.

The rebels also faced a shortage of modern arms. The guns and cannons, cartridges and gunpowder they required were brought from outside India. Consequently, the rebels had to fight with old guns, arrows, spears and swords. How long could such weapons last in a contest against the more modern arms?



The English Point of View

The above cartoon shows the way the English imagined one of their brave women killing Indian "mutineers" in 1857. Compare this picture to the one of Rani Lakshmi Bai on the opposite page. What are the two different points of view they show?

Different people have used different words for the same event in history. Find out the meanings of each of the following and tell who you think might have used each one:

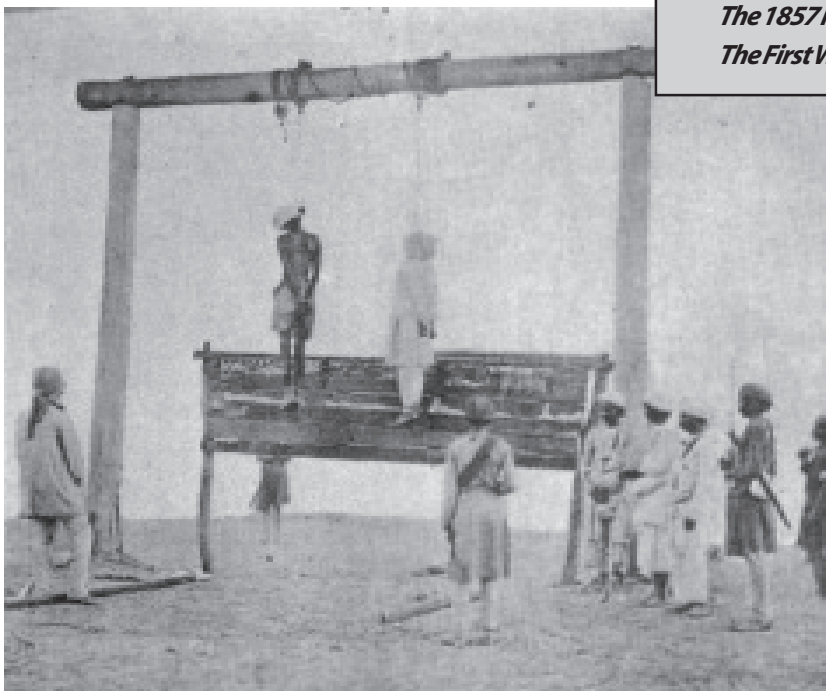
The Mutiny of 1857

The 1857 Uprising

The 1857 Revolution

The 1857 Rebellion

The First War of Independence



Even then, the speed with which the revolt spread frightened the English. So they behaved with great cruelty whenever they suppressed a rebel group. They killed the rebels in a most inhumane way and hanged their bodies from trees in the villages so that the village folk could 'understand' the consequences of revolt.

They tied some rebels to the mouths of cannons and blew them to bits. Many rebels went into hiding, moving from place to place to avoid being caught by the English. Many of them even went to places like Nepal to hide.

The English deported Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to a far away place (perhaps Rangoon) and it was there that the last Mughal emperor died.

The revolt of 1857 was the biggest revolt to challenge the might of the English. After suppressing it, their hold over India became stronger and they ruled the country for the next 90 years.

Choose the correct alternative:

- a) *The rebels of 1857 wanted to (restore/remove) _____ Mughal rule.*
- b) *The weakness of the English army was that most of its soldiers were (European/Indian) _____.*

What were the weaknesses of the rebel Indian armies?

Many Stay Away from the Revolt

There were many Indians who did not participate in the revolt. They had their reasons for staying away. For example, the revolt was not so intense in Punjab, Bengal and South India. Many kings who still retained their kingdoms supported the English and did not join the revolt. They included kings like Scindia of Gwalior, Holkar of Indore, Nizam of Hyderabad, the Rajput kings of Rajasthan, the Nawab of Bhopal etc.

Many *zamindars* and moneylenders who had increased their wealth with the help of British laws also did not fight against the English. There were many villages where the English had built canals for irrigation. Those villagers who benefited from this facility also supported the English.

In addition, there were many social reformers and scholars in Bengal and Maharashtra who believed that the science, education and law brought by the English were good. They believed that the true

welfare of Indians lay in adopting these ways to reform their society. They believed that rather than resisting the English, efforts should be made to learn from them. They felt that if the rule of the Mughal *badshah*, nawabs and rajas was re-established, India would be taking a backward step. These scholars, too, did not oppose the English.

After the Revolt

It took the English more than a year to suppress the revolt of 1857. During this period, they changed many of their policies and adopted new ones.

In 1858, Queen Victoria of England made an important declaration. She said Indian kings should rule their own kingdoms without anxiety because the English would not try to dethrone them. In this way they established a close collaboration with the royal families of India. Similarly, the *zamindars*, too, were given many concessions and were assured that their property would be protected.

Queen Victoria, crown in hand, became Empress of India in 1876.



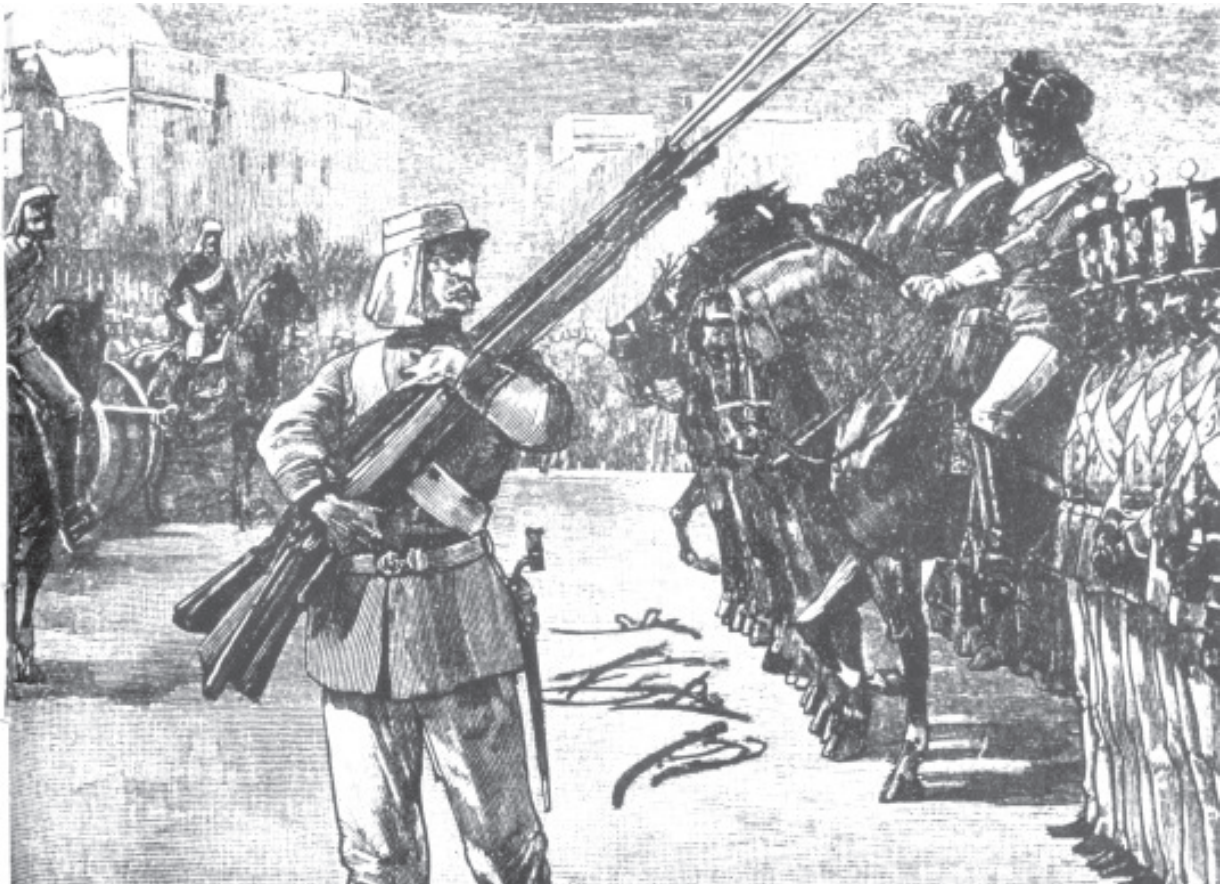
The *pundits* and *maulvis* were assured that the British government would not interfere in matters relating to Indian religions and would let the old traditions continue. There was also a promise that Indians would be included in the government.

The truth is that the English had seen their Indian empire being snatched away in 1857. Now they directed their efforts towards giving all kinds of concessions to some of the elite powerful Indians, to conciliate them and ensure that they continued to support the English.

Exercises

1. ***Why did the European trading companies maintain armies in India? What role did these armies play in the business of the companies?***
2. ***Why do you think the European armies were able to defeat the Indian armies in the 1700's and 1800's?***
3. ***Imagine that you are a villager living at the time when the Mughal Empire has been declining and the English are beginning to establish their rule (sometime around 1800). Write a first person account telling your opinions about the Mughals and about the English.***
4. ***In 1857, who were the people of India who revolted against the English, and who were the ones who stayed away from the revolt? Explain why they each acted the way they did.***
5. ***In 1857, which soldiers felt their religious faith was being violated, and why?***
6. ***In what ways did people revolt against the British in 1857?***
7. ***What did the people who revolted in 1857 want to achieve?***
8. ***In Queen Victoria's declaration of 1858, what complaints of the rebels did she try to address?***
9. ***What are some similarities and differences between the way the Mughals came to power in India and the way the English came to power in India?***

The English disarming Indian soldiers in 1857



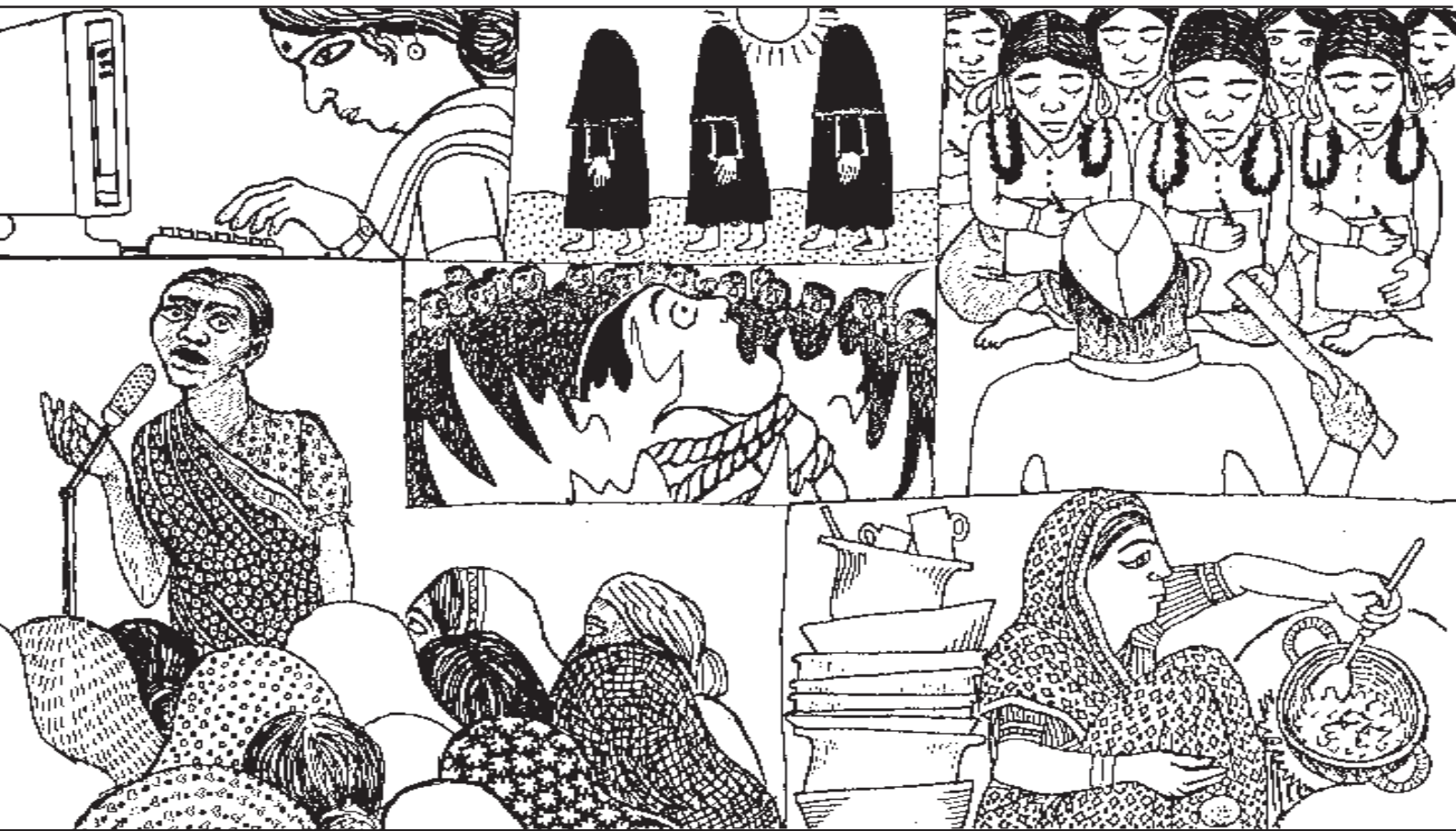
CHAPTER 2

NEW IDEAS

AND

ATTEMPTS AT SOCIAL REFORM

IN THE BRITISH PERIOD



Look at the above pictures. They show women and girls in different situations. Have you seen similar situations where you live?

Which of these sights do you think you could have seen 200 years ago?

Many important changes have taken place in the situation of women since the time the British ruled India. Our ideas and beliefs, not only towards women but also towards caste and religion, have changed quite a lot. If we look at our long history we can clearly see that many attempts were made to question what was happening in our society

and to reform it. For example, in Class 6 we learned about the ideas and beliefs propagated by Gautama Buddha and Vardhaman Mahavir. In Class 7, we learned about saints like Kabir, Nanak, Mira and Tukaram, who tried to reform social practices and beliefs.

What is there in society that makes it necessary for people to try and reform it from time to time?

Here are some of the issues that were taken up by different movements for social reform:

- Unequal treatment of women.
- Worship of idols and practice of rituals.
- Practice of inequality and untouchability based on caste.
- Intolerance towards other religions

Discuss this list in class and add more issues to it, if you like.

Also, discuss what you understand about these issues. Think of examples related to them. Do you find such things happening in your neighbourhood? What are the positive and negative influences of these issues on society?

Should such attitudes and practices be reformed or changed in some way? Discuss and write your conclusions.

Let's see how new ideas spread during the time of British rule and what efforts were made for social reform.

Demand for English Education

When the English began ruling India, they encouraged the growth of traditional *paathshaalas* and *madrasas*. In the *paathshaalas*, students studied the *shastras*, *puranas* and Sanskrit grammar, while in the *madrasas* the Quran and other religious texts were taught. Some Indians who came in contact with the English and knew about the education given in England were not happy with the way the English were encouraging traditional education in India. These Indians were people who either served the British government, or practiced law, or worked with English traders etc. They were

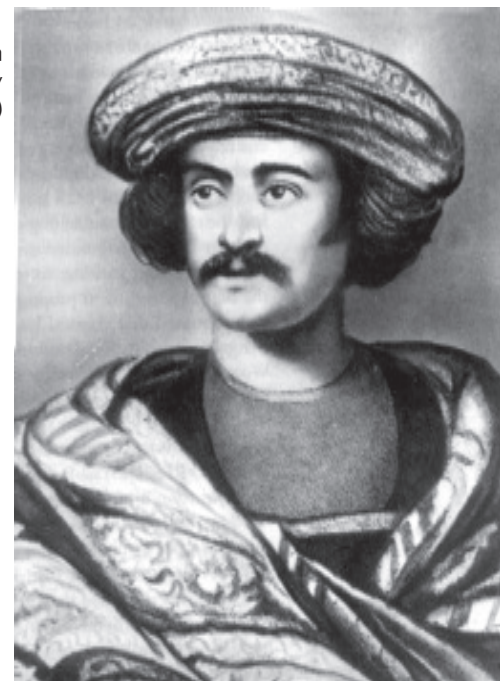
impressed by the ideas of the English and wanted English education to spread in India, so that Indians could learn new science and acquire knowledge to develop themselves like the English had done.

One of these persons was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He belonged to a *zamindar* family of Bengal. When Ram Mohan Roy learned that the British government was setting up a Sanskrit *paathshaala* in Calcutta, he wrote a strong letter of protest, demanding English education.



Girls studying in a Madrasa in Bengal in 1829

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)



Here is what he wrote:

"We have learned that the British government is opening a Sanskrit paathshaala under the auspices of pundits wherein such knowledge will be imparted as has already been existing in India. Such paathshaalas can only fill the minds of the youth with the minute rules of grammar and knowledge of another world and cannot offer anything that will be of practical use to the student or society."

"As it is the objective of the government to improve the local peoples, it should encourage the study of mathematics, philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences. This task can be fulfilled by appointing persons educated in Europe and building a college equipped with books and instruments."

Calcutta, 11 December 1823.

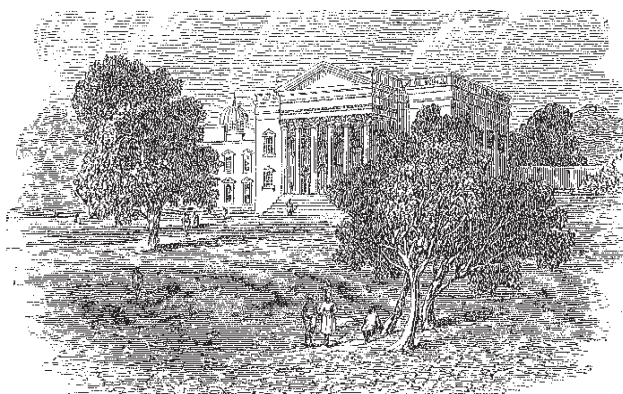
Discuss Ram Mohun Roy's attitude towards learning that is useful for society. Do you think such a view was right for those times? Is it right for the present times? Discuss both the pros and cons of these questions.

Like Ram Mohan Roy, thousands of other people in India put pressure on the British government to make immediate arrangements for English education in India. People had come to believe that it was a knowledge of science that had helped European countries advance more than other countries. They felt the reason for India's backwardness was the lack of good science education in the country. Many people felt such education was needed to remove the backwardness and keep pace with European countries.

The British government also realised that it needed people educated in English, who appreciated the ideas and attitudes of the English, if it wanted to rule India for a long time. How else could it handle such a vast

administration? The English knew that they could bring some people from England to India and make them government officers, but it would be too expensive to appoint English officers and servants for all the jobs, big and small. So, at least for the posts of clerks, workers and junior officers, they needed Indians with some English education. Keeping this in mind, the British government made a plan to spread English education in India. It was an Englishman named John Macaulay who drafted this plan. That is why it is called Macaulay's Education Policy.

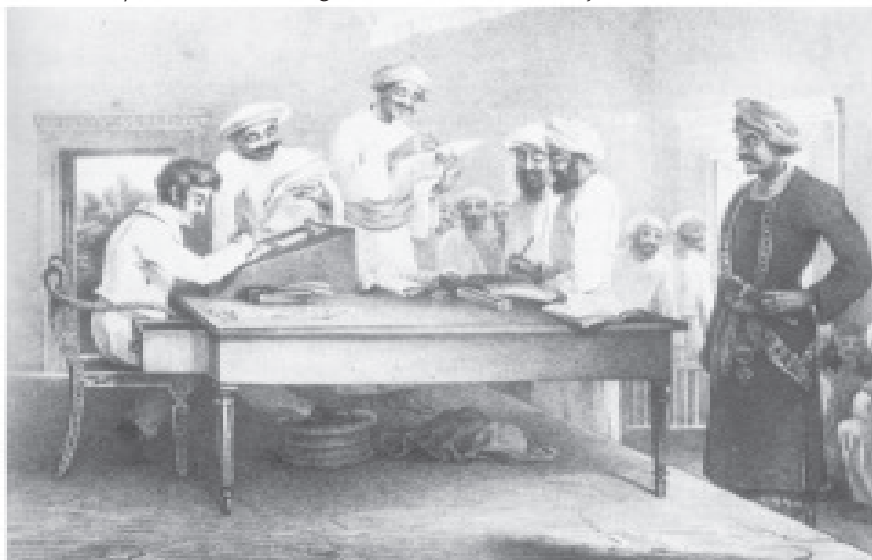
As a result of the new policy, many people in India started opening English schools and colleges with government help.



Serampore College, opened to educate Indians in the English way

English, Indian languages, science, geography, history and arithmetic were the subjects taught in the schools imparting English education. Some of these schools were set up by Christian missionaries, in order to spread Christianity as well as education.

The British had to educate some Indians in English so that they could work as government clerks and junior officers.





Can you see the English influence in the style and subject of this painting?

Why did some Indians want English education? Why did the British government want to provide English education? Did they both have the same reasons for spreading English education?

The Impact of English Education

Can you imagine what effect an English education could have had on the minds of students who went to study in the new schools and colleges?

One such student, Ruchi Ram Sahni, who studied in the college at Lahore, wrote about his experience:

"I am, of course, grateful to my teachers. But I also want to add that on coming to the Government College at Lahore I found such a treasure of knowledge spread before my eyes as I had scarcely seen before. To all intents and purposes, all the books of the college were contained in the fifteen almirahs kept in a big hall. However, to a person who had never seen a library, and who was thirsting for knowledge, the small library of the government school and the big library of the government college were like an ocean filled with valuable pearls - into which anyone could dive and fetch pearls of knowledge."

After their classes, students would take books from the library to read. Among these were many important books written in England and Europe. Filled with curiosity and a craving to understand the new world of Europe, students would try hard to read books written in English, even though these books were not in their courses.

For example, the works of John Stuart Mill championed the cause of equality in society and criticised the domination of men over women. Sahni wrote about his experience of reading Mill's books:

"Together, Gurudatt and I would read John Stuart Mill's little book, line by line, para by para. We would try and understand its meaning, we would discuss and debate over it. There were times when we would not be able to do more than a sentence or two because either we would not have been able to grasp the real meaning of the author, or the whole time would pass by in discussing how far we ourselves could put into practice what was written in the book."

Do these lines remind you of any experiences you have had with books? Share your experiences in class.

The Study of Ancient Texts and Their Impact

People were greatly affected by English thoughts and manners and by the advancements in science and technology. But there was also another strong influence on their thinking. A deeper knowledge of ancient Indian texts and scriptures was helping people to look more closely at the social and religious practices that were widespread in those days. In the early days of British rule, many ancient *shastras* and *puranas* were translated from Sanskrit. These became available in English and other Indian languages. This was also the time when large numbers of printing presses were being set up. Many essays and booklets written to explain and analyse these texts were printed. Many literate people could study them, and discuss them with other people.

People thus came to know that what they practiced as religion had not always been the same. For instance, they realised that the *vedas* and *upanishadas* did not emphasise the worship of idols or the importance of temples.

Many followers of the Sikh religion were also questioning why they should follow the rites and rituals that the priests made them practice, if they were not part of the original teachings of Guru Nanak as contained in the *Adi Grantha*.

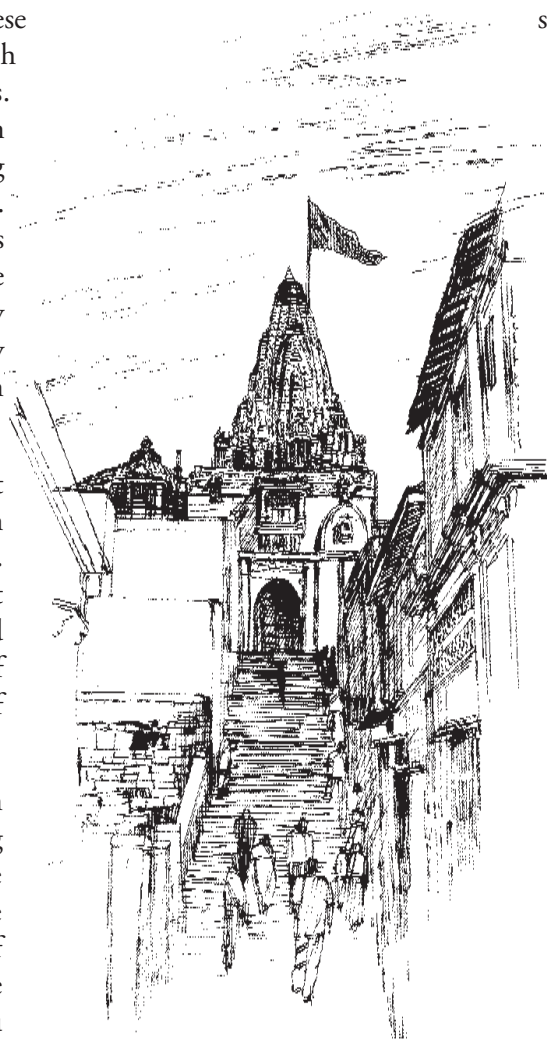
Many Muslims began realising that many of their religious practices, such as the worship of saints at their graves or *mazaars*, were not important in the Quran.

On the whole, it was a time of ferment, of questioning and re-examination. This feeling was spurred on by the criticisms of Indian religious practices by English officials and Christian missionaries. The worship of idols, the importance of elaborate rituals and other superstitious beliefs were strongly criticised by them. English officials wanted to frame new laws to curb what they felt

were wrong practices in Indian society. Christian missionaries felt that it was their duty to save the Indian people from ignorance and misery by converting them to Christianity.

In this atmosphere created by English dominance, a feeling was growing among the more educated Indians that there was no reason to follow social and religious practices exactly as they were. Some said that many such practices were not even part of the earliest religious texts and tenets, nor were they suited to the present times. They felt they were living in an age of 'rationality', where progress in science and technology was important. This meant that people could question, discuss, and change their own beliefs. They said that people should work for the common social good. Thus

they wanted to continue to practice only those religious and social customs that were rational and for the common good.



What impact did a study of the ancient religious texts have on people's thinking?

Campaign to Reform Society

People began asking many kinds of questions. For instance:

"How can God reside in idols and temples? Has anyone seen God? How can God have a colour, shape or size?"

"What is the meaning of all these rules about caste and untouchability?"

"All human beings are equal. They are all children of God. Then why should we believe in differences of caste?"

"Aren't women also human beings like men? So why is there such cruel behaviour towards women in our religion and society? If we call ourselves civilised, why should we continue to accept the cruelty that is practised against women?"

In this atmosphere, many educated Indians began coming together to oppose the wrong practices in their society. Some people adopted Christianity. Others thought about adopting Christianity but then decided not to become Christians. One such person was Moro Vitthal of Maharashtra. He wrote: "When I was a student, I lost my faith in the Hindu religion and my mind started leaning towards the Christian faith. But I thought that before adopting the new religion, I should compare it with the older one. Thus, when I studied Christianity, I found that, as in Hinduism, there are many superstitions in Christianity too. Then, I felt that no religion is the gift of God.

"The truth is that the fundamentals of all religions are alike and these we can discover through our own wisdom. This natural religion is found in every place and it must, therefore, be the true religion.

Its essence is that 'God is one and we should have faith only in Him. Doing good to others is the greatest act of piety. Doing harm to others is the greatest sin.' On determining these common religious principles, we gave up our plan to become Christians."

Quite a number of Hindus went through similar experiences. They did not become Christians. But they did not remain traditional Hindus either. They formed organisations to work according to their new religious ideas. For example, the Brahmo Samaj was formed in Bengal and Paramhans Mandali was formed in Maharashtra.

People found that there were many poet saints from earlier times who had talked about the wrongs and ills of society and religion. They had tried to teach people to live according to new ideas and feelings. Sant Ramdas, Raidas, Nanak, Kabir, and Tukaram - they all opposed caste discrimination, brahminism, idol worship and ritualism. They taught people to worship only one universal God, in a direct manner, and to believe in the equality of all human beings.

The social reformers tried to spread ideas of social change taken from the teachings of these saints. For example, reformers of the Prarthna Samaj in Maharashtra propagated the teachings of Sant Tukaram.

Here is a verse written by Kabir. Discuss its meaning in your class.

मोंको कहाँ ढूँढे रे वन्दे, मैं तो तेरे पास में।
ना मैं देवल ना मैं मसजिद, ना कावे कैलास में।
ना तो काउन क्रियाकर्म में, नहीं जोग बैराग में।
ना मैं छगरी ना मैं भेंडी, ना मैं छुरी गँडास में।
नहीं खाल में नहीं पूँछ में ना हड्डी ना माँस में।
मैं तो रहों सहर के बाहर मेरी पुरी मवास में।
खोजी होय तो तुरतै मिलिहों, पल भर की तालास में।
कहैं कबीर सुनो भई साधो, सब साँसन की साँस में।

Why did many Indians decide not to adopt the Christian faith? But, at the same time, why could some people not accept the traditional Hindu faith?

Was it a good idea to form new religious organisations? What do you think?

You can imagine how much resistance there was in society to people who promoted new religious ideas! Let's look at some examples.

Resistance to Social Reform

Members of the Paramhans Mandali held secret meetings in Bombay where they would eat food together. By eating together they wanted to break the caste differences that existed among them. They could not do this in the open. That's why they met secretly in a rented room. But when the landlord came to know about what they were doing, he refused to let them have the room on rent any longer.

The members of the Mandali felt that they could come out in the open to spread their beliefs and ideas only if they had more than a thousand members.

Do you think they were wise to think in this way? Why?



People who belonged to the Brahmo Samaj preached in open gatherings. They said there are good points in all religions – and that Christ and Mohammed were both great saints. On hearing this, people attending the meetings would get up and run out saying: “Arrey arrey, these Brahmo Samaj-walas are actually Christians!” “Arrey, they are actually Muslims! ...”

So we can get some idea about how difficult it was for the social reformers to spread their ideas to other people. Many parents were even afraid to send their children to English schools. Newspapers carried letters appealing to the people not to send their children to learn English because they believed that these children would lose faith in their religion and reject the caste system.

Why do you think some people wanted to preserve the caste system in society?

If you were in a gathering of the Brahmo Samaj, would you have got up and left? How should we and how do we respond to ideas that are different from ours?

Do parents still hesitate to give their children an English education today? Discuss the reasons for the changes in attitude towards English education that have taken place in many sections of society.

In those days, it seemed like a war was being fought between those who held traditional beliefs and those who believed in new ideas. To a great extent, this kind of clash continues even today.

There were proper *shastrarthas*, or learned debates, in those days. People with traditional ideas and those with new ideas would collect in a public spot and debate with each other and the public would listen to them. The views of both sides would also be printed in the form of booklets and distributed.

Let's take a look at a *shastrartha* in which those who supported traditional religion are arguing that the custom of *sati* is right.



A *Shastrartha* on the Custom of *Sati*

This debate on sati took place between Pundit Tarkalinkar and Ram Mohan Roy. Tarkalinkar favoured sati while Ram Mohan Roy wanted to abolish the custom.

Tarkalinkar: "Rishi Angira said that the woman who desires to go to heaven should burn in the funeral pyre of her husband."

Ram Mohan : "But Manu and Yagyavalkya said that after her husband's death a woman should live a plain and simple life. They did not say that a widow should become a sati. Besides, you people tie a woman to her husband's funeral pyre and arrange loads of wood over her so that even if she wants to, she cannot get up and run. When you set the pyre on fire, you keep the woman pressed down with bamboo sticks. This is nothing short of murdering the woman. In which shastra do you find anything written about forcibly burning a woman?"

Tarkalinkar: "This isn't written in any shastra, but it is a very ancient tradition in our country. For that reason, sati must be practiced."

Ram Mohan: "Sati did not exist in our country in every time or place. And then, think about this - theft and murder too have been happening in society from very olden times. Will you consider them right? Even though they are ancient, we oppose crimes such as theft and murder. In the same way, the custom of sati is murder - an inhuman crime. Therefore, it should be stopped."



Ancient traditions do not say only one thing. There are many variations. Are there any such variations mentioned in the above conversation?

Should the rules be different for women and men when it comes to the right to live? A husband is not expected to burn himself on his wife's pyre when she dies. So is the

New Rights for Women

Laws for Widows

Due to the efforts of Ram Mohan Roy, the British government passed a law in 1829 abolishing the custom of *sati*. But there were many other customs that were unjust to women. For example, in the castes that were called high, widows were not permitted to marry again, while widowers could re-marry. A widow had to wear white clothes, cut her hair and could not be invited to attend auspicious functions.

Like Ram Mohan Roy, many other social reformers raised their voices for the welfare of widows. They demanded that widows should be allowed to marry again and that a law should be passed to this effect. Among those who launched this campaign, the most prominent was Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar

The question of widows remarrying became a very important issue of social reform because, in those days, most girls were married off when they were still children. If they became widows in their

childhood itself, they were forced to spend the rest of their lives as widows, in sorrow and rejection.

In 1856, a law was passed to allow widowed girls to marry again.

Female Infanticide

Another important issue that was taken up by the social reformers was female infanticide. In some provinces, a girl's life was considered so worthless that people followed the custom of sometimes killing a female infant at birth if the parents had wanted a son.

The English government took action against this custom and made it illegal to kill a newborn female infant.

In this way, the government put legal restrictions on some major acts of cruelty towards girls and

women. Along with the government officials, Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Keshubchandra Sen, Mahadev Govind Ranade and many other social reformers tried to ensure that these laws were implemented. Slowly, many people began

to support them, though there was no shortage of people to oppose them.

If you had lived in those times, would you have supported or opposed these new laws? Give reasons for your views.

Are these unfortunate customs found even today?

Women's Education

Apart from curbing many of the unfortunate customs against women, the social reformers also launched a campaign for educating women. People like Vidyasagar felt that women's lives were

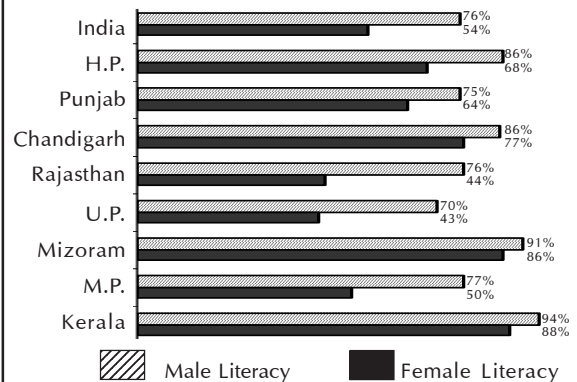


important. They felt that women should also have the right to develop their intelligence. Accordingly, they should be provided with modern education.

As a result of the efforts of these social reformers, many schools were opened for girls. However, there were many people who strongly resisted these efforts to spread education among girls. They felt that if girls became educated they would not remain under the control of their husbands and

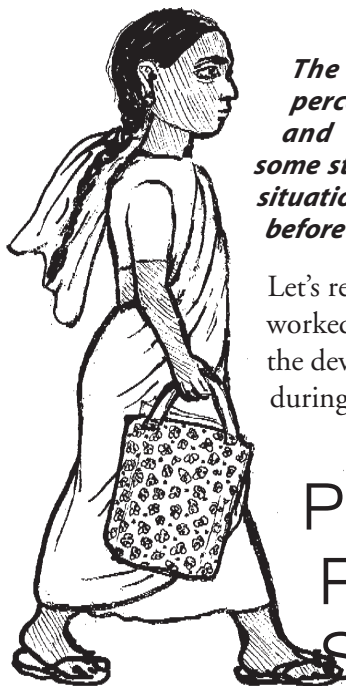
would not do household chores. Some people even felt that the husband of an educated woman would die at an early age. People even socially boycotted those parents who were courageous enough to send their daughters to school. Nevertheless, many families began opting for social change and slowly girls began to study in schools and colleges.

Female and Male Literacy Rates in 2001



However, even today, fewer girls are educated by their parents than boys.

Are girls and boys given equal opportunity and encouragement to be educated in your home? If there is any difference, how do your family members justify it? Do you think this is correct?



The graph here shows percentage of literate men and women in India and some states. Do you think the situation is better today than before?

Let's read the story of a girl who worked with great courage for the development of women during the time of the English.

**Pandita
Ramabai
Saraswati**

Ramabai was born in 1885. Her father, Anantha Shastri, was a traditional brahmin of Maharashtra. However, he began teaching his wife Sanskrit. There was so much opposition to this move that Anantha Shastri had to leave his village. He went with his family to a forest where they built a hut to live in. It was here



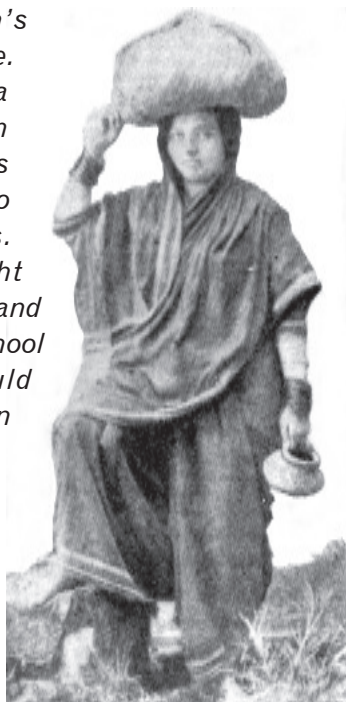
that Ramabai was born. Anantha Shastri also taught his daughter Sanskrit. He taught her the shastras and puranas. When Ramabai was 16 years old, both her parents died. Orphaned, Ramabai and her brother wandered from place to place, but no one offered them shelter. Not only did people avoid them but, in fact, they blamed the educated girl for her misfortune, as if she had committed a grave sin or crime.

After wandering around like this for some time, Ramabai reached Kolkata. She found a great welcome awaiting her in the city. Many people in Kolkata were influenced by Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar and others. So they held new ideas about women and welcomed Ramabai. She delivered many lectures in Sanskrit, discussing the importance of improving the condition of women. The people of Calcutta conferred upon her the titles of 'pandita' and 'saraswati'. She came to be known as Pandita Ramabai Saraswati.

Ramabai later adopted the Christian faith.

She remained unmarried till the age of 22, when she married a man of her own choice. In those days, it was unheard for a woman to remain unmarried till the age of 22 and to marry a man of her own choice.

Ramabai devoted her whole life to helping women. She continued doing this work even after she was widowed. She travelled alone to England and America to learn about the women's organisations there. On her return to India she started an ashram and school known as Sharada Sadan to educate widows. Women were taught many kinds of skills and vocations at this school so that they could stand on their own feet.



Ramabai went to Vrindavan in the guise of a pilgrim to rescue young widows.



Sharada Sadan when it began in 1889

Ramabai felt it was very important for women to stand on their own feet. She often said that women bear everything silently because they have to depend on men.

"Men behave with us women like they behave towards animals. When we make efforts to improve our situation it is said that we are revolting against men and that it is a sin. In fact, the biggest sin is to endure the ill deeds



of men and not oppose them," she said.

This was how Ramabai began one of her lectures at a meeting: "Respected members of the audience. You should not be surprised at my weak voice. When the women of India have never been given the opportunity to speak, how can their voice be strong?"

Her complaint was that just as no one lends an ear to Indians in England, no one lends an ear to women in Indian society.

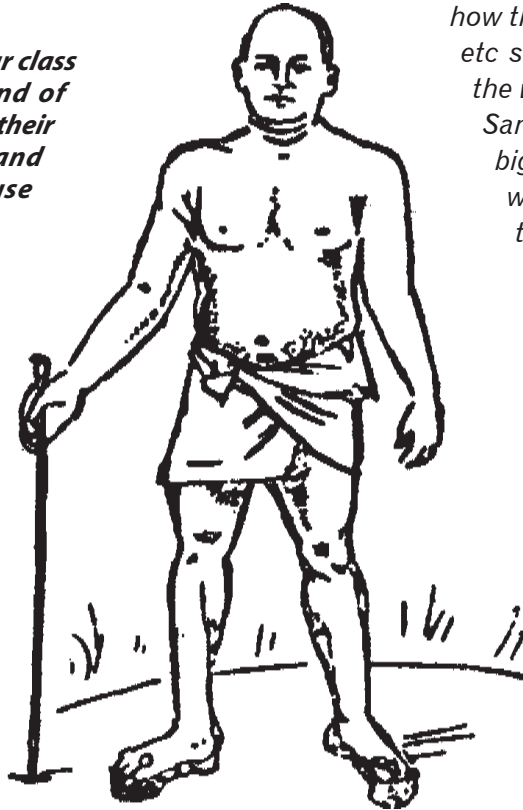
Do you think that the complaints made by Ramabai on behalf of women were justified?

Would some girls in your class like to narrate the kind of difficulties they face in their school, home and neighbourhood because they are girls?

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Dayanand was a sanyasi. He said the culture of the arjans in the vedic age was free of the ills we see in our culture today. For instance, in the vedic age, customs like idol worship, child marriage, untouchability, restrictions on widow remarriage, etc did not exist. All these ills crept in at later stages in society and were then written in scriptures like the puranas. So he launched a campaign for the adoption of the vedic culture of the arjans. He formed an organisation known as the Arya Samaj to pursue this objective.

This organisation became very popular in Punjab. It also had an influence in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.



Swami Dayananda Saraswati

The Arya Samaj prepared a book titled *Sanskar Vidhi*. The book explained in detail how the rituals for birth, marriage, death etc should be conducted according to the vedic method. Branches of the Arya Samaj were opened in many places - big and small towns - and members were enrolled. The Arya Samaj tried to help people to understand the vedic practices themselves and adopt the rites in their own lives. Slowly, large numbers of people began supporting the Arya Samaj.

Naturally, the orthodox Brahmins strongly opposed the Arya Samaj. They actively protected the orthodox Hindu religion, which they called *sanatana dharma*. They began forming organisations called Sanatana Dharma Sabhas.

While the Arya Samaj continued to face a lot of opposition regarding religious rituals, another of its programmes met with great success. This was the opening of Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College and School in Lahore. Its objective was to educate children in modern English

knowledge and science while also providing them with a good education in Sanskrit and the vedas. This fulfilled both the desires of people - that their children



should get an English education and acquire new knowledge that would help them get jobs, and at the same time, they should learn about their own

religion.

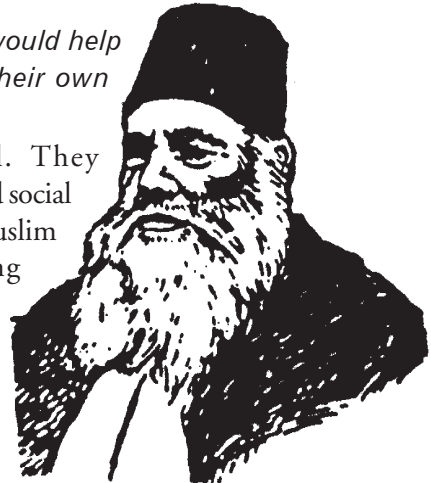
Even after the propagation of the ideas of the vedic culture, why did the orthodox pundits and people continue to oppose the social reformers?

Muslim Reform Movements

Just as reformist Hindus had to struggle against brahmins and *pundits*, so too did reformist Muslims have to struggle against their religious leaders, like the *maulvis*. Most *maulvis* were against the English and they opposed English education strongly.

Despite the opposition of the *maulvis*, some Muslims did acquire an English education. They made efforts to spread new ideas among the people. Among those who pleaded for new ideas and English education were Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

and Dr Iqbal. They strongly opposed social practices like Muslim women wearing the *burqa*. Some reformers went to the extent of defiantly getting their daughters to take off their *burqas* and come out in the open.



Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

Like the Hindus, the Muslims too were concerned about preserving their religion. They made efforts to establish institutions where people could get a modern education while learning the basic tenets of their religion. Among the major institutions opened for Muslims were Aligarh Muslim University, Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia and the

Unani Ayurvedic College.

Efforts were also made to promote the education of Muslim women. One such effort was by a Bengali woman named Begum Rokeya, who started a girls' school. She wrote a very interesting book in 1905 called *Sultana's Dream*. What was Sultana's dream? It was a dream of an ideal society where women were rulers, science was encouraged, the environment was protected and cared for and men were kept in

pardah!

***What is your dream about a good society?
Is it different from Sultana's dream?***

The Reform Movement Among Non-brahmin

Castes

You saw that the social reformers were opposed to caste discrimination, untouchability and ritualism. But these reformers belonged to the castes that were considered high. Around the same time, there were also many social reformers from the castes that were considered to be low. They came forward and attempted to uproot the caste system and the beliefs in ritualism.

Many children of the so-called low castes had begun to get educated in the schools run by Christian missionaries. These schools did not discriminate against children coming from the so-

called lower castes of society.

Unlike the earlier rulers, whether Hindu or Muslim, who tried to

stand by caste rules observed by their subjects, the British government refused to propagate discrimination among people on the basis of caste. It refused to implement such rules through its courts.

In such an atmosphere, many educated people emerged from the so-called low castes and threw themselves with great courage into the work of social reform. Major social reform movements took place in Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Let's learn more about such movements from the efforts launched under the leadership of Jyotiba Phule of Maharashtra.

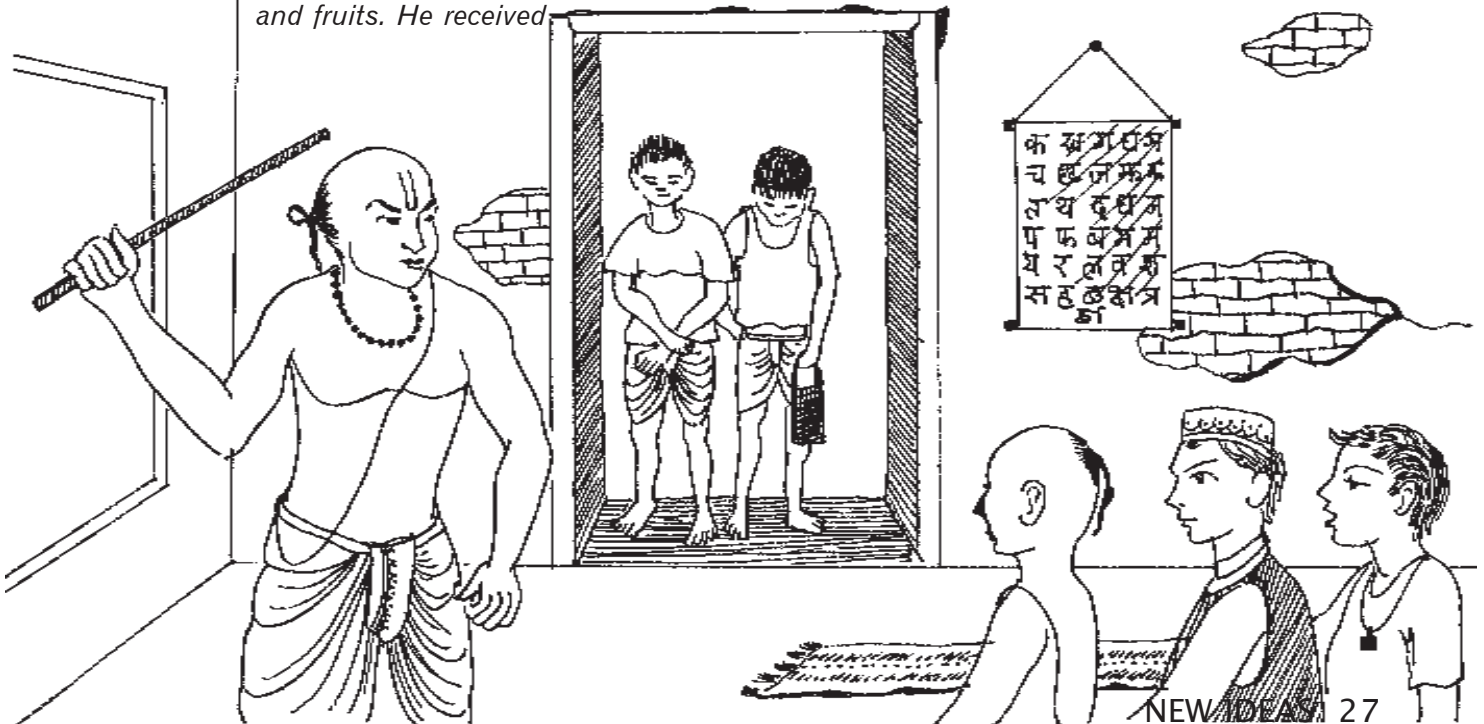


a few years of education in a Christian school. When he grew up, he and his wife wanted to open a school for girls of the mahar and maang castes. His father was angered and threw them out of his house.

Jyotiba had a deep understanding of the problems of castes that were considered low. He wrote many plays and books about these problems. In his writings he showed how brahmins secretly told people of the mali and kunbi castes not to send their children to school, and how the patels treated people of these castes badly. He wrote about how brahmin teachers beat the children belonging to the castes considered as shudras, so that they would flee the school and never return. He also told how brahmin priests forced the poor to pay absurd and unnecessary expenses, and how the officials in government offices and municipalities, who were brahmins, troubled the needy farmers of other castes in many ways.

Jyotiba Phule

Jyotiba Phule belonged to the mali (gardener) caste and sold vegetables and fruits. He received



Jyotiba Phule founded an organisation called Satyashodhak Samaj to build a new society based on truth. The samaj undertook the following main tasks:

- Demanding and setting up schools, colleges and hostels for the children of castes considered low so that the children of these castes could acquire an education and rise in society. The teachers and instructors in these institutions would also belong to the so-called low castes.
- Organising essay, debate and public speaking competitions for students belonging to the castes thought of as low, so that their hesitation and shyness might be broken and they may be enabled to put forth their views in front of others as strongly as people from the so-called high castes.
- Encouraging and helping those belonging to the castes considered low to conduct all their religious ceremonies without the brahmins. People could perform the rites themselves or keep a priest belonging to their own caste and give him the *dakshina*.



This campaign was quite successful. For example, a news item published in 1873 says that 700 people of the *mali*, *kunbi*, *kumhar*, *badhai* and other castes launched a campaign to free themselves from the brahmins and they began conducting the *shraddha* ceremonies for their ancestors without the brahmins.

In 1884, a newspaper printed the news that the shudras of 40 villages in Junnar conducted 300 marriage ceremonies without the brahmins. So frustrated were some brahmins by this

protest that they actually went to court to claim their right to *dakshina*. But they lost their case.

These movements popularised ideas about the rights of the castes that others considered low and the need for their development. Later, leaders like Dr B.R. Ambedkar also fought to remove the injustices being done to these castes.

Do you think programmes such as the ones

started by the Satyashodhak Samaj, are necessary even today? Which of their original tasks do you think are still relevant?

After Independence

Many changes took place in our society as a result of the efforts of the social reformers. But we cannot say that the reforms were totally successful. Even today, we can see much around us that the reformers wanted removed during the time of the English. Even today, people are trying to reform society in one way or another.

What efforts do you see today to reform the following - the condition of women, caste discrimination, religious ritualism?

Due to the social movements begun in the time of the English, equal rights have been given to women and men in the Constitution of independent India. People of all castes and religions are considered equal. Many systems have been created to eradicate the injustices done to the so-called low castes. For example, the system of reservation has been introduced.

To accept these ideas in the Constitution and law is one thing. But to really carry them out is another. Even today, there are many who struggle to put into practice the ideas of equality, rationality and justice.

Exercises

1. ***What kind of people wanted to spread English education in India in the 19th century? Why did they want to do this?***
2. ***Why did the English government want to spread English education in India?***
3. ***What impact did English education have on students?***
4. ***What reforms did members of the Paramhans Mandali want that sparked off strong opposition?***
5. ***What was the treatment meted out to widowed women during the times of the English?***
6. ***Is it necessary to educate women in order to improve their situation? Explain why or why not. Write your own views.***



You have read about how some people were raising issues of women's rights more than 100 years ago. This picture, drawn in Bengal in the Kalighat style, shows a woman being mistreated by her husband. Have you ever seen cases of women being mistreated these days?

HISTORY

British Dominance
and
Indian Independence

A module from the book

SOCIAL STUDIES
Class 8

AN EKLAVYA PUBLICATION



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CHAPTER 3

British Rule and The Peasants of India



Pay your Tax or your Land will be Auctioned Off!

Like the Mughal rulers, the British also wanted to collect as much tax from the peasants as they could. During Mughal rule, if peasants did not pay their land tax on time, the amount they owed would be noted against their names. They would then have to pay it later. If they didn't, it would be taken from them by force, if necessary.

But the British introduced a different system. If peasants or zamindars did not pay their tax on time, their land was sold off in an auction to whoever offered the highest price. The government

would take the tax from the money paid by whoever bought the land. If the land had been sold for more than the amount of the tax that was owed, the remaining money would be given to the original owner, who would no longer own the land.



Peasants arguing with a British officer about their problems.

You may have read or heard about auctions, for example in a mandi or vegetable market. Describe an auction.

If you don't know about auctions, ask your teacher to explain how they are conducted. See how selling things in an auction is different from the way things are sold in shops in a market.

Peasants and zamindars faced various kinds of problems in those days. Sometimes their crops would be destroyed by floods or famines. Sometimes the prices of crops would be so low in the market that the peasants got very little money when they sold their crops. When this happened, they found it difficult to pay their taxes. But the British government wouldn't listen to the peasants' problems or exempt them from paying tax. It did not even give people extra time to pay their taxes when they had a shortage of money. Instead, the government would get a court order to auction off their land.

Thus, the land of hundreds of peasants and zamindars was auctioned off by the British rulers. Many peasants had borrowed money from moneylenders in order to pay their taxes. However,

if they did not repay their loans on time, the moneylenders also went to court to get their land auctioned to recover the loan money.

What were two main aspects of the British system of collecting land tax?

What effects might the British system of tax collection have had on:

- (a) ***ordinary peasants***
- (b) ***rich zamindars***
- (c) ***moneylenders***

With this new British rule for collecting tax, many peasants fell deep into debt. But there was also another reason why their debts kept increasing. It was because there was an increase in foreign trade and the export of agricultural produce.

Let's study the example of cotton trade to understand the effect it had on peasants.

Cotton Export and its Effects on Maratha Peasants

In the 1700's India had been exporting a lot of cotton cloth to Britain and other parts of Europe. But by the middle of the nineteenth century (around 1850), many mechanised cloth mills were being set up in Britain to cheaply produce cotton cloth. These mills got most of their raw cotton from the USA.

When a civil war broke out in the USA in 1861, the supply of cotton to the mills in Britain almost came to a halt. As the mill owners continuously needed cotton for their factories - they began buying cotton from India. Hence the demand for Indian cotton increased.



This led to an increase in the price of cotton. From 3 annas per kilo, the price of cotton rose to 12 annas per kilo. Many peasants in cotton growing areas like Maharashtra began growing cotton instead of food grains because of the high price it was fetching in the market. They began to take loans from moneylenders so as to increase the area under cotton cultivation.

Since cotton cannot be grown in Britain's cold climate, it was brought there from other countries. This picture from 1872 shows a trader sampling the raw cotton available in a warehouse in Kolkata.

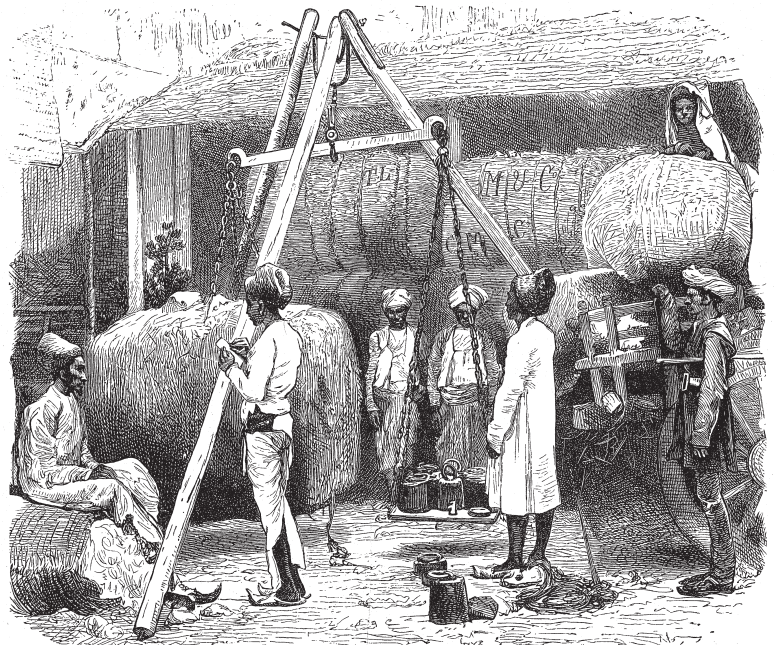
In 1865, the civil war in the USA came to an end and the supply of cotton to Britain was resumed. The demand for cotton from India fell and so did its price. Cotton that fetched 12 annas per kilo in 1864 now fetched only 6 annas per kilo. The peasants suffered a lot as they could not earn enough to pay back the loans they had taken. Added to this, they also had to pay tax to the government. The moneylenders got richer and richer as more and more peasants came under their grip.

The suffering Maratha peasants began revolting against the moneylenders to whom they were so much in debt.

Thus, the growth of foreign trade and events in faraway countries like the USA led to large profits as well as heavy losses for Indian peasants. Besides cotton, Indian wheat, sugar, indigo, jute, tea, etc were also sold in other countries. When the prices of these crops increased or decreased, Indian peasants were affected.

Which of the following statements are false? Correct them:

1. In the 19th century, cotton was grown in the USA and India, and supplied to cloth factories in Britain.



Weighing cotton in India for export to Great Britain

2. Between 1861 and 1865 there was a large increase in the supply of cotton from the USA to Britain.
3. British factories that produced cloth preferred Indian cotton to cotton from the USA.
4. Indian peasants increased cotton production when the peasants of the USA could not grow the crop because of the civil war.
5. Cotton prices fell sharply when demand went up.



Maratha Peasants Revolt Against Moneylenders

In 1875, the peasants of Pune and Ahmednagar in Maharashtra revolted against the moneylenders of their villages.

In village after village, the peasants surrounded the houses of moneylenders and tried to seize their account books. If a moneylender refused to hand over the account books, they burnt down his house. Other villagers supported the peasants. Even the barbers and washermen refused to serve the moneylenders. Many moneylenders fled from their villages to escape the anger of the people.

Here is how the peasants explained the reason for their uprising: "These moneylenders get *kurki* (notice of auction) from the court. If we cannot pay our debts they auction our homes and land. For generations, these people have kept us burdened with debt. However much we pay, the debt is never fully repaid. They have put false debts against our names in their account books. Only when their account books are burnt to ashes will our problems be solved." Eventually the government tried to tackle the problems faced by the peasants and a new law was passed to control moneylenders so that they could not easily cheat the peasants.

How did the trade in cotton add to the debts of the Maratha peasants?

Why did the Maratha peasants revolt against the moneylenders?

Who owns the land?

One question troubled the British a lot - from whom should they collect land tax in India? They kept debating and trying different solutions to this problem at different times and in different parts of India.

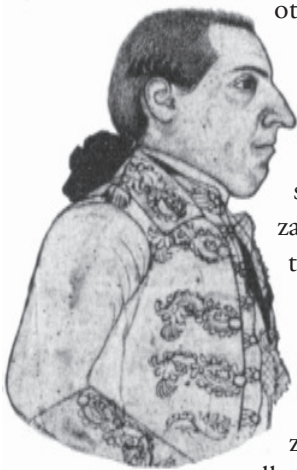
The British knew that the zamindars were powerful people and if they won the support of the zamindars, it would be easier for them to rule India. They also knew that it was difficult to collect tax directly from hundreds of thousands of peasants.

The British also wanted to collect tax from the actual **owners** of the land who either worked on the land themselves or got the lands cultivated by

others. Now the question was, who were the owners of the land? There were no owners as such in Mughal times - land was not something that was bought and sold like it is today. The zamindars, jagirdars and others had the right to collect land tax and other payments from the peasants who were tilling the land. The peasants had the right to occupy and cultivate the land. The zamindars could inherit, gift, or sell their rights to collect taxes from

the peasants. The peasants could also inherit, gift, or sell the right to cultivate it. But not many peasants would 'buy' land, because they could just start cultivating some of the available unused land without having to pay anything.

However, by the 19th century, population was rising and new land suitable for cultivation was becoming scarce. It was no longer so easy for peasants to shift to new places and find untilled land to plough.



If land had not become scarce, would the British have been able to auction the land of peasants and zamindars who could not pay the taxes on time?

In 1793 the British decided to declare the zamindars as the owners of the land and collect tax only from them. They argued, "We have a rule that if people fail to pay the full tax in time, we auction their land to get the money. So the zamindar who we collect tax from must be considered the owner of the land, otherwise whose land will we auction if tax is not paid? If a person is paying the tax for some land, how could someone else be owning the land?" The zamindars were given full rights over the land, thus making the peasants their tenants or **sharecroppers**. They no longer had any rights over the land they cultivated. This system was put into practice in Bengal, Bihar and the Awadh region of Uttar Pradesh. The revenue for the land was fixed permanently and the zamindars had to pay the tax to the British by a fixed date each year.

Compare the systems of land ownership and tax payment before and after 1793.

If you were a peasant during British times, what would you think about the new system of land ownership? What would you think if you were a zamindar?

The Peasants' Land and the Zamindars' Rights

This story is based on the conditions described in government reports of that time.

Once they became legal owners of the land, the zamindars took advantage of their new rights and the helplessness of the peasants. The peasants could be evicted from the land easily. It was also very difficult for them to leave the villages, as there was no land available elsewhere. They were becoming more and more indebted. The following story of a peasant from Awadh, UP, shows how the zamindars treated their tenants.



Gayadeen was a poor peasant who lived in a village in Awadh region. One day he went to the market to sell his cow.

Why do you think he wanted to sell his cow? This is what Gayadeen had to say: "Every year, the zamindar demands a bigger and bigger share of the money I get after I sell the crops. He keeps increasing the amount every year. How can I pay him when I don't have any money? He filed a case in the court against me. Now I have to sell my cow to pay him."

The zamindar let Gayadeen plough the land only after he paid the money.

Next year Gayadeen arranged the marriage of his 10-year-old daughter to an old man. Why do you think Gayadeen made his young daughter marry such an old man?



This is what he had to say: "The zamindar wants me to pay a *nazrana* of Rs 500 this year. He says he will let me plough the land only if I pay the *nazrana*. If I don't pay he will evict me from the land. What am I to do? This old man has given me Rs 500 for my daughter. I will pay this money to the zamindar so that I can plough the field. Otherwise, what will I eat?"

The zamindar took a share of the crop from the land cultivated by Gayadeen. Why didn't Gayadeen refuse to pay him? Why did the zamindar take *nazrana* from Gayadeen?

Like Gayadeen, many hundreds of thousands of peasants were reduced to a pitiable state. They filled the purses of the zamindars with their hard earned income. The zamindars took advantage of the peasants. They took more money from the peasants than the tax they paid to the government. Of course they never gave receipts for the extra money they collected from the peasants.

The zamindars kept this extra money because they felt it was their share. According to them, the peasants were only tenants on their land. Because the zamindars were now the owners of the land they began to increase their share whenever they felt like it. They also gave out their land for farming to whomever they favoured and evicted those they did not like.

The Zamindars Exploit the Peasants in Many Ways

Even before the zamindars became legal owners of the peasants' lands, they had some land of their own. These were known as *khudkasht* (खुदकाशत) or *seer* (सीर) lands. The zamindars had sometimes hired labourers to till these lands or else they gave them to the peasants on sharecropping.

When the zamindars became owners of the peasants' land they thought, "Why should we pay someone to cultivate our seer land? Why don't we just make our tenants cultivate this land for us?"

So the peasants were forced to do *begar* (बेगार: work without wages) on the seer land of the zamindars. If they refused, the zamindar's soldiers would beat them up and force them to do *begar*. The zamindars soon began terrorising the peasants. Their soldiers would even catch peasants walking on the road and force them to do *begar* in the zamindars' fields.

Because they were forced to work on the zamindars' fields, many peasants could not cultivate their own fields properly. They would also not improve their fields. Their plight can be seen in a government report written in 1878. The report says that the peasants do not try to dig wells on their land or irrigate it, nor do they try to *bund* their fields or dig drains or use fertilisers. "They do nothing to improve their land because they fear they can be evicted from their land at any time. If they improve their farming, the zamindar immediately increases the share he takes from them. But the zamindars also prevent the peasants from improving their fields because they are afraid that the peasants would then start asserting their rights over the land."

What were khudkasht lands?

In whose fields did the peasants have to do begar?



Why were the peasants not keen on improving cultivation in the fields rented out to them by the zamindars? Why were the zamindars also not keen to improve the land?

Countless Collections, Cesses and Payments

So the peasants faced many problems on the land they cultivated. The zamindars also tried to extract as much money as they could from the peasants under a variety of pretexts. If the commissioner saheb came on a tour to the area, the peasants were forced to pay a contribution known as 'commissioneraavan'. Similarly, the peasants had to make a contribution known as 'hathiaavan' for the elephants of the zamindar. If the zamindar wanted to buy a motor car, a 'motoraavan' was collected. Or if he bought horses the peasants had to give a 'ghodaavan'. The zamindars extracted countless such contributions from the peasants. It was reported that once a *thakurain* (zamindar's wife) had to spend a lot of money to treat an abscess infection and the peasants had to contribute a 'pakaavan' fund to cover the cost of treatment. They also had to regularly supply ghee, milk, vegetables, *gur*, straw, cowdung cakes, etc free of cost to the zamindar's house.

This was the situation in many provinces of India. Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh had many big and powerful zamindars. Each of them owned dozens or even hundreds of villages. The peasants kept trying to resist the excesses of these zamindars.

The Peasants Protest

Awadh Peasants Protest Against Oppression by Zamindars

In 1920-22, the peasants of Awadh in Uttar Pradesh took out huge processions to protest against the zamindars who were extracting money from them. Many zamindars were socially boycotted and driven from the villages. The peasants also refused to till the fields of those zamindars who tried to evict their tenants or claimed too much rent from them.

The peasants formed 'kisan sabhas' to carry their agitation forward. Baba Ram Chandra, Jhinguri Singh, Suraj Prasad, Madari Pasi were some of the well-known peasant leaders in Uttar Pradesh. The British government helped the zamindars to suppress the revolts. But the British saw how powerful and impressive the agitation of the peasants was, so they soon made laws in favour of the tenants.

Bardoli Peasants Protest Against Increasing Land Tax

The British had made different arrangements to collect land revenue in different parts of India. They found out that a lot of the money the zamindars collected from the peasants did not reach the government but was pocketed by the zamindars themselves. So in some areas, like Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the British decided to do away with the zamindari system. Instead they would fix the amount of land tax for each cultivating peasant and collect the tax directly from the peasants. They also gave up the idea of permanently fixing the revenue rates. They decided to fix the revenue rates for thirty years at a time. Peasants who cultivated their own land would be responsible for paying the same amount of tax each year for 30 years.

Now let's find out exactly what happened when this system was implemented in Bardoli (बाड़दौली) Taluka of Surat district of Gujarat.

In 1896 the government had fixed the land revenue in Bardoli for thirty years. In 1926, when the thirty years had ended, the government had to again decide the amount of tax – whether it should be kept at the same rate for the next thirty years or increased.

The government decided to increase the tax by 22 percent. When the peasants of Bardoli found out about the government's decision they were furious. They said, "There is no reason for increasing the tax so much. The government should first study the problem more carefully. It should not increase the tax just like that. We won't pay the increased rates. If the government wants, we will continue paying the tax we are paying now. But if it doesn't agree, we will not pay even a single paisa."

The government did not agree to the demand of the peasants. It was adamant about increasing the tax.

The peasants decided to launch an agitation against the government. They asked Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahatma Gandhi





from the Congress Party to support their agitation. The Congress party had been formed by then and was working for the freedom of the country. Members of the Congress party came to Bardoli to support the peasants. In all, 137 villages took part in this movement which was launched in February 1928.

Seize and Auction

The peasants of Bardoli devised many ways of not paying tax. As we saw earlier, the government would seize the crops, land, utensils, jewellery, animals and other things belonging to the peasants who refused to pay tax and sell these items to recover the amount of the tax.

In many villages of Bardoli, the peasants hid their utensils, jewellery and other possessions in the houses of their relatives living in other places. Boys from the villages would hide in trees and keep watch. As soon as government officials were spotted they would blow a bugle to let the village people know. On hearing the warning the villagers would set loose their cows, bulls and buffaloes and lock their houses. The government officials then had no way of

finding out which animals belonged to which peasant. So, they could not confiscate things from the peasants so easily.

The village people also refused to give the government officials food, water or a place to rest. These officers would be forced to leave, frustrated, in the blazing sun of April-May.

If the government officials did manage to confiscate some animals, the peasants would go and set them free at night. The peasants who refused to pay tax even found a way to get back their land after it was auctioned away by the government. If some people from the village bought the land, peasants would get together and put so much pressure on them that they would be forced to return the land to the original owner. If people from outside purchased the land and came to the village to till it, the villagers would forcibly evict them.

Many peasants tried to secretly pay tax because they feared their land would be confiscated. However, the agitating peasants decided to boycott these people who gave in and agreed to pay tax. They stopped eating, drinking and sitting with them. This is how they put pressure on such peasants and made them join the agitation.

In this way many peasants were able to protect their lands from confiscation and continue their protest against the government. However, there were still many peasants who suffered huge losses. Troops of policemen and tax officers would break the locks of their homes and destroy them while confiscating utensils, jewellery and other household goods. There was no guarantee that the confiscated land or goods would be returned. A large number of peasants never got their auctioned land back. However, the peasants continued to show great courage and refused to pay tax. They came out in open confrontation of the government and refused to be cowed down by the police or army. They were not even afraid of the threat of being jailed.

They were defiant, saying, "If the army turns up, can they extract tax from us? Will all these white people load our land on an aeroplane and take it to Britain? Let them try. We'll see what they can do."

The peasants' movement received support from the educated people as well as the mill workers and other people. In the end, the government had to bend to the will of the people and the tax was increased by only 6 percent.

After seeing what happened in Bardoli, the government decided not to increase the tax in other places. The peasants of Bardoli had made the British government bow to their will and this sent a wave of joy and enthusiasm throughout the country. Gandhiji said that movements like the one at Bardoli would help the country to free itself from British rule.

Why did the peasants of Bardoli refuse to pay tax?

What losses did the agitating peasants of Bardoli have to suffer?

Do you think the Bardoli movement was successful?

The Telengana Movement in Andhra Pradesh (1946-50)

Another very powerful protest movement by the peasants took place in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh. This region was not under British rule but was under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad.

The protest began in 1946-47 in a village called Bishnupur. The zamindar of the village, who owned 40,000 acres of land, tried to grab a small piece of land belonging to a poor washerwoman. The peasants rose up in protest. Within a few days, the protest spread far and wide. It was led by people belonging to the Communist Party. The peasants bought guns and formed their own army and drove the officials and zamindars away from almost 3,000 villages. They seized their land and redistributed it among the peasants and labourers.

The peasants set up their own administration in these villages. *Begar* was stopped, the wages of the labourers were increased and land was restored to tenants who had been evicted earlier by the zamindars. A rule was made that no one would have the right to own more than 100 acres of non-irrigated land or 10 acres of irrigated land. If anyone had more land than this, the excess was distributed among poor peasants.

Meanwhile, India became independent in 1947. After Independence, the Indian government promised the peasants of Telengana that it would make laws in their favour and asked them to end their agitation. It also sent in the army to suppress the movement.

Women practicing shooting in the Telengana Movement



What did the peasants of Awadh want?

What did the agitating peasants of Telengana do to help their people?

The zamindars of Awadh and Telengana were powerful people. Yet for long they could not resist the agitating peasants. Discuss why.

The Peasants and Laws in Independent India

The agitations during British rule focused attention on the problems, demands and hopes of the peasants. It was clear that the peasants wanted the government to reduce tax and free them from the stranglehold of moneylenders and the terror of the zamindars. They also demanded that the land should belong to the peasant who actually ploughed it.

After India became independent, tax was greatly reduced. The government also opened banks and co-operative societies to give loans to the indebted peasants. But the biggest decision the government made was to put an end to the zamindari system in all of India.

The law to abolish the zamindari system was passed in 1950. The government decided to collect tax directly from each peasant and not through the zamindars.

The law also said that the zamindars would be the owners of their own seer land but would no longer have any right to the peasants' lands. The peasants were made the owners of their own land.

Naturally, the zamindars were not happy. They demanded compensation from the government for taking away their 'right' to the lands of the peasants.

Do you think the demand of the zamindars was just and correct?

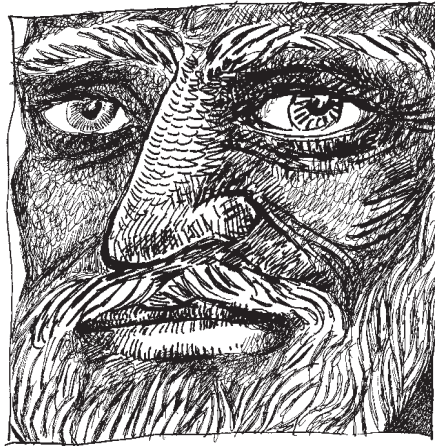
Here is a folk song from Haryana sung in the days when India became independent. It expresses what the peasants were hoping to have after five years.

पाँच साल के बाद देखना,
दुखिया ज़मींदार नहीं रहने
सब जाति इकस्तर होवै,
कोई ताबेदार नहीं रहने।

मशीन काट दे, मशीन काढ़ दे,
आराम बढ़ा देगी।
भारतवासी कहै या आज़ादी गंगा,
किसी धाम बढ़ा देगी।

It is hoped that in five years the miseries of the peasants would be eliminated, all castes would become equal and no one would dominate others. Machines would do all the work and people would live in comfort. This independence would make villages prosperous and they would become places of pilgrimage.

The government decided to pay compensation to the zamindars. It acquired land from them after paying some compensation. When the government found that it had spent a lot of money in paying compensation, it made a rule that the peasants would be given their land only if they paid some price for it. This was not acceptable to many people. Those peasants who could pay, became the owners of their land and were freed from the burden of the zamindari system. However, hundreds of thousands of poor peasants could not pay the price. So they remained landless sharecroppers or labourers and had to keep working in the fields of big peasants and one-time zamindars.



What laws have been implemented to protect the interests of tenants and agricultural labourers in the area where you live?

Even today, all those who till the soil in India are not the owners of the land they till. There have been agitations even after Independence to restore land rights to those who plough the land.

Find some elders in your area who are from villages that used to be under a zamindar (or malguzar). Find out from them what kind of relationship the zamindar had with the peasants of the village.

What changes have occurred in your area after the law to abolish the zamindari system was passed?

Are there any landless peasants or agricultural labourers in your area? Why don't they have land of their own?

However, after Independence some laws were also made to safeguard the interests of the tenants, so that no one could claim an unfair share from them and they could not be evicted from the land without reason. Some laws were also made in the interests of labourers. But big peasants found many ways of ignoring these laws.

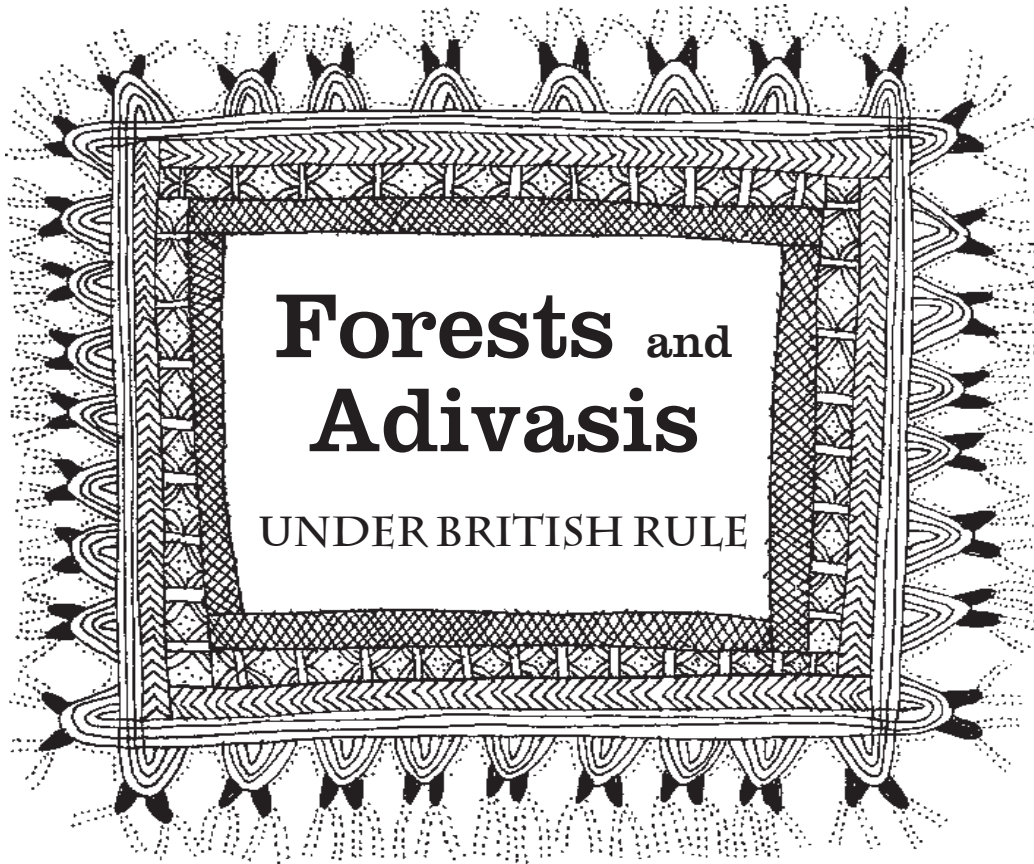
Exercises

1. **Write at least fifteen sentences to describe the impact of British rule on the peasants of India.**
2. **What effect did the 1861-65 war in the USA have on the Maratha peasants? Explain.**
3. **Do peasants suffer severe losses if the price of a crop falls drastically even today?**
4. **In what ways did peasants fight the oppression they felt from moneylenders, zamindars and the government?**
5. **If you were a peasant in the 1930's, how would you try to get your rights?**
6. **How do peasants fight for their rights today?**



"Threshing",
a painting by
KK Hebbar

CHAPTER 4



How Forests Were Used Before British Rule



From time immemorial, adivasis and villagers living in and near forests got many things they needed for their daily lives from the forests. In a way, they were the owners of the forests. They used the forests for hunting, gathering tubers, fruits, flowers and herbs and for grazing their cattle. In some places, they cut down and burnt the trees and cleared the land to cultivate crops. They cut wood to build their homes and to make implements. They took things for their personal use. If they had to sell some forest produce, it was only to buy other things they needed from the market, such as salt and iron. They did not sell the wood and other things they got from the forest to earn a profit.

Although large tracts of forests were cleared for making fields, and there were tensions between farmers and tribal people, large areas of land continued to remain under forest cover. The farmers and adivasis who used these forests also protected them. When they needed wood, they took care to cut only old trees and allowed new trees to grow. They did not blindly cut large tracts of forest, but only small patches so that the forest would not be destroyed.

From time to time, the people living in forests gave valuable gifts of ivory, animal skins and honey to the kings and emperors. Those who cultivated land in the forests sometimes also paid taxes. Many

adivasis farmed by shifting cultivation also known as *jhum* agriculture. As long as the forest dwellers did not threaten the security of the kingdoms, the kings and emperors left them alone and did not make laws or rules to control how they used the forests. So for many centuries, the adivasis lived in harmony with their forests, getting many of their daily needs from them and looking after them carefully.



Underline four sentences that represent the situation of adivasis and their use of forests before British rule.

How Forests Were Used During British Rule

The situation changed during British rule. At that time, large cities like Kolkata and Mumbai were coming up and the government was laying thousands of kilometres of railway lines all across the country. Huge ships were also being built and mines were being opened. Large quantities of wood were needed for all this, so the trade in timber increased rapidly.



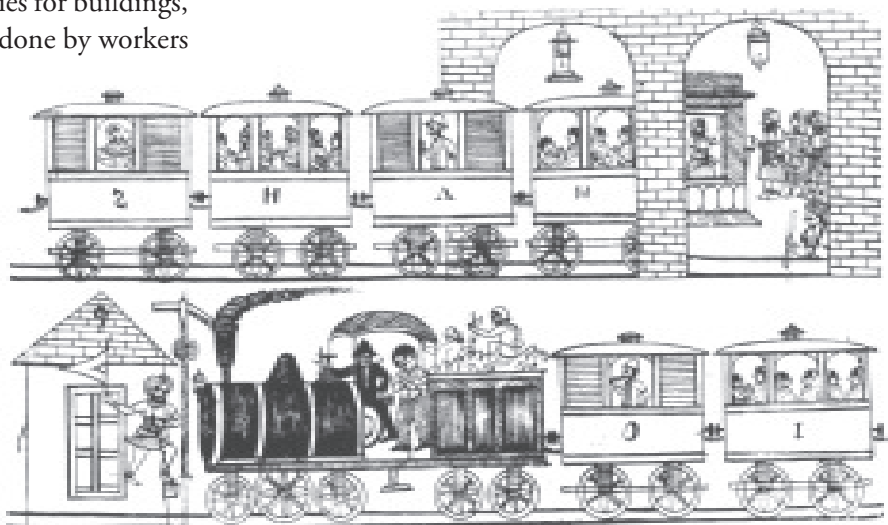
1890s: Cutting sleepers from Himalayan forests to make new railway lines

Sleepers for Railway Lines

In 1879, there were almost 8,000 kilometers of railway lines in India. By 1910 more than 50,000 kilometers of railway lines had been laid. Each year, almost one crore wooden sleepers were needed to lay these new railway lines.

The wood for these sleepers was cut from the forests in the Himalayan and Terai regions. Wood was also cut and sold in huge quantities for buildings, mines and ships. This work was done by workers hired by timber traders and forest contractors.

The British government and British companies made large profits from this trade. The government would hold auctions to sell the contracts for cutting forests. The contractors paid large sums of money to win the contracts, so the government earned a lot of money through these auctions.



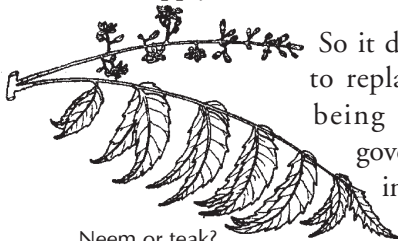
Indians were not allowed to use the coaches reserved for the British. In this picture from those days can you tell which coaches are for Indians and which are for the British?

Why did the use of forests change under British rule?

Have you seen old wooden sleepers used in railway tracks? What are they being replaced with today? Discuss why this replacement is taking place.

Forests in Danger and the Need to Plant New Trees

As the trade in timber increased, the British government was worried. Where would it get wood for its future railways, ships and houses if the forests were cut down so rapidly? The government felt that it should do something to ensure a regular supply of wood.



Neem or teak?
Which should be planted?



So it decided to plant new trees to replace the forests that were being cut down. But the government was not interested in planting trees that were useful to the common people, such as mango, mahua, neem, etc. It wanted to plant only trees that provided the timber that was in great demand in the market. So it began to have trees like teak and pine planted in place of the forests that were being cut down.

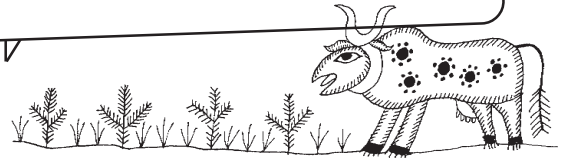
The Government sets up a Forest Department

Most importantly, the government set up a Forest Department in 1864. The Forest Department made new laws and rules to protect the new forests it was planting. Through these rules it also tried to ensure that the old forests did not vanish completely but were cut more carefully. These rules and laws helped the government to control the forests. The Forest Department felt the forests needed to be protected from the people living in or near them.

16 ADIVASIS

Here are some of the concerns of the forests officers:

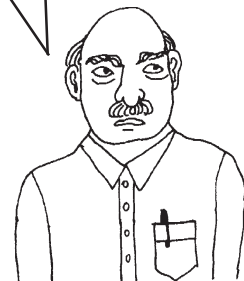
When we plant new saplings to replace the trees that have been cut, the cattle from the villages feed on them and destroy them. Villagers must be prevented from coming to the forest.



The village people burn the grass in the forest in summer so that grass for grazing can grow after the monsoon. This fire does not affect the big trees, but the saplings we plant are burnt. There should be a ban on burning grass like this.



The village people damage valuable trees like teak by chopping off their branches and twigs. Because of this we do not get a good price for the timber. The village people must be stopped from chopping branches like this.



So, in 1878, the government enacted a new forest law to stop people from using forests freely. Under this law, forests were divided into two categories:

1. Reserved forests - in which no one could enter.
2. Protected forests - from which people could take head-loads of wood and small forest produce for their own use and could graze their cattle. But here, too, there were many restrictions such as - "You cannot cut trees," "You cannot burn grass," "You cannot graze for more than two days or else you will have to pay a fine."

With these rules and laws, the forest people lost the rights they had always enjoyed over the forests. They were no longer so free to cut wood, graze cattle, gather flowers and fruit or hunt in the forests.

Why did the Forest Department feel the need to plant new trees?

Why did the Forest Department feel the need to put restrictions on villagers?

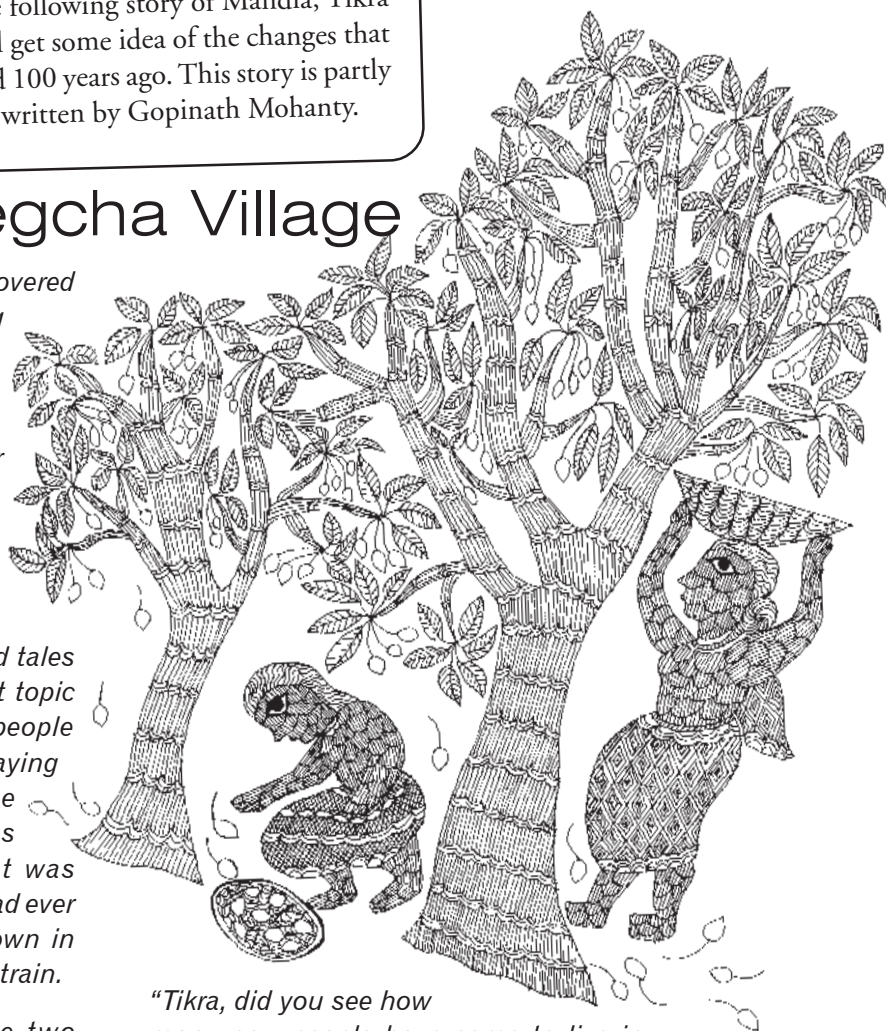
How did the new British laws affect the lives of the people who lived in or depended on the forests? Through the following story of Mandia, Tikra and Kajodi in the hills of Orissa, you will get some idea of the changes that came in the lives of forest dwellers around 100 years ago. This story is partly based on a famous novel called **Paraja**, written by Gopinath Mohanty.

The Story of Degcha Village

Degcha village was situated on a hill covered with forests. The adivasis had been using the jhum method to cultivate land on the forested hills and valleys surrounding their village. They also hunted and gathered forest products for their needs. Some of the things they collected in the forests were taken to a nearby market and exchanged for cloth, salt, iron, oil etc.

The people of Degcha village often heard tales of the British at the market. The hottest topic of discussion was the railway. Some people had seen a white saheb directing the laying of railway tracks. One day a train came chugging over these tracks and for months on end there was no other topic that was discussed. This was the first train they had ever seen! People were eager to visit the town in the hope that they could get to see the train.

After returning from the market, the two brothers, Mandia and Tikra, often sat together talking about how everything around was changing.

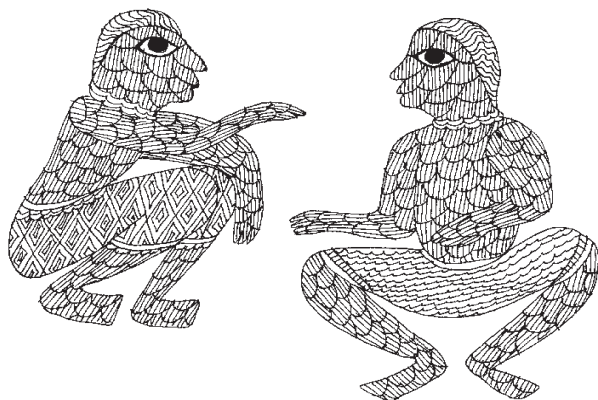


"Tikra, did you see how many new people have come to live in the town?" Mandia would say.

"Yes," Tikra would reply, adding, "But what is disturbing is that all the forests in the lower plain are being felled."

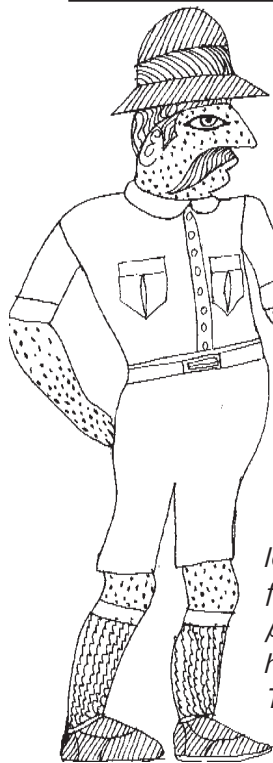
"Yes, yes. People who farm with ploughs and bullocks have settled down there. Entire new villages have come up in the plains."

The government was auctioning land in the plains in order to attract farmers and zamindars. People would buy land in the



auction, register it to their names and settle there. The government was doing this in order to expand cultivation so that it could collect regular tax from the region. But Mandia, Tikra and the other adivasis had absolutely no idea that such auctions of land were taking place.

What changes did the people of Degcha village see in the town and around it?



The land is registered in the names of the villagers

One day, a white s a h e b dressed in shorts and wearing a topi rode into Degcha village on a horse. He looked at the forests and the fields and asked the *pradhan* (प्रधान : the headman) a lot of questions. This year the people were cultivating on the slopes of Dumka Hill. The whole village gathered around to take care of the guest. Who knew what might happen - he might just get angry over something or the other and do God knows what! This was what everyone was worried about.

The white saheb left that very day. After a few days, a group of Indian officials came to the village. The tehsildar saheb and the revenue inspector were with them. They began measuring each field on Dumka Hill and noting it in their register. On getting to Mandia's field they asked him, "From where to where is your field?"

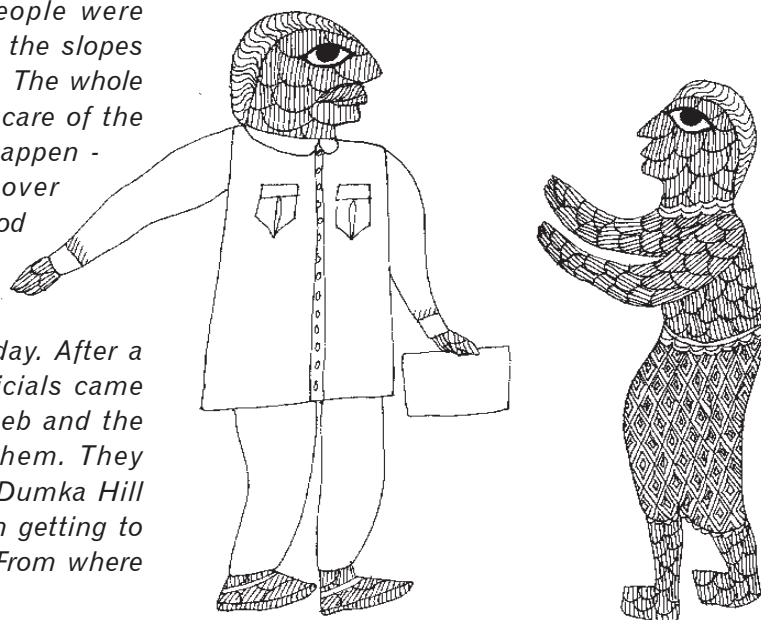
Mandia showed them the area he had cultivated this year. Having measured it the inspector said, "I am registering these two bighas of land in your name. From now on do your farming only in this plot. Don't cut the jungle anywhere else. The rest of the jungle belongs to the government."

"What are they saying?" Mandia thought to himself. "Each year we cut a new part of the jungle for cultivation! We leave the old fields so that the forest can regrow. How can we keep growing crops on the same land year after year? The land would get worn out!" He was right – the soil in that region would not stay fertile if it was used for crops year after year. But there was such fear in him that he dared not say anything.

Having registered the fields made on Dumka Hill in the names of the villagers, the revenue inspector left.

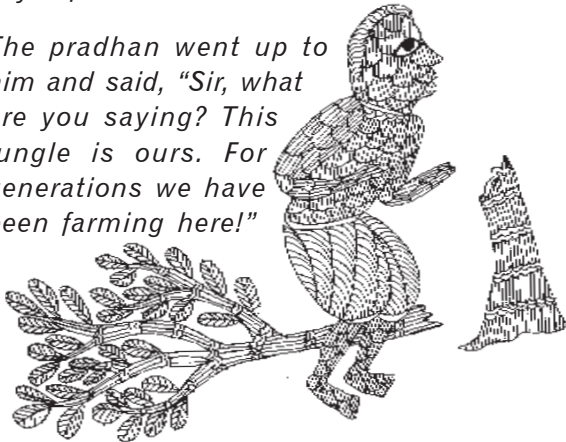
This jungle belongs to the government

Next year it was the Dhanuka Hill's turn to be cultivated. The *pradhan* of the village took everyone there and distributed the fields as usual. Thud-thud, thud-thud! The work of cutting the trees began.



For many days the work continued. Then suddenly one day a man in a khaki uniform was seen climbing the hill. He was the forest guard. He shouted, "Hey you, what are you doing? This jungle belongs to the government. It is forbidden to cut trees here. Anyone who cuts trees will have to pay a fine."

The pradhan went up to him and said, "Sir, what are you saying? This jungle is ours. For generations we have been farming here!"



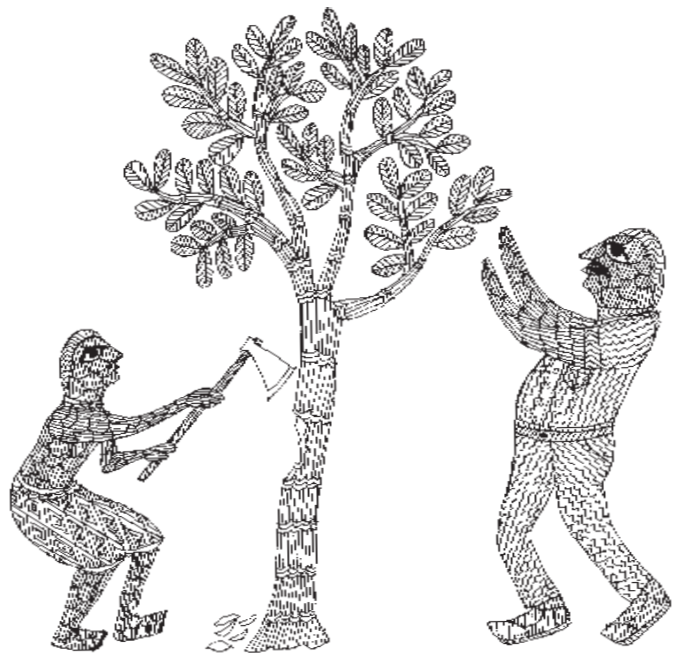
The guard said, "Your land is registered on Dumka Hill. The jungle here has been taken by the government. It is not yours. You better come to the chowki and pay the fine. Each of you will have to pay 20 rupees. Follow me."

The villagers were stunned. The pradhan called everyone and had a hurried consultation. Everyone ran to their homes and brought all sorts of things and presented them before the forest guard - eggs, chickens, pumpkins, turmeric. With folded hands they said, "Please keep all these things, sir, and please let us cultivate our lands. Otherwise where will we go, and what will we eat?"

With the helpless people before him, the forest guard's greed got the better of him. "All right, all right - put all this down! But one thing you better understand - I am doing something very dangerous. If I let you cut the government forest, what will happen to my job?"

The pradhan said, "You are everything to us. Whatever you say we will do. But please let us do our farming!"

The forest guard looked left and right, then taking the pradhan aside he said, "All of you



give five rupees each. Then I will take this risk for you. Think it over. I will come again the day after tomorrow." Saying this, he left.

The pradhan told everyone what the forest guard had said. A great deal of thinking and discussion took place. But in the end, somehow or the other, the people managed to collect the money and give it to the guard. Those who did not have the money borrowed from the moneylender in the nearby town. This was what Mandia also did.

Why did people of Degcha village not see that it was wrong to farm on Dhanuka Hill? And why did the forest guard find it wrong?

The government believed that it had a right over the jungle. The people of Degcha village believed that they had a right over the jungle. In your opinion, whose claim was more justified?

Debt and Bonded Labour

Giving the forest guard gifts and money in order to continue farming in the jungle came to be a routine thing. People resented it because they had to go grovelling before others for what they considered to be their own right. They also had to keep on borrowing from moneylenders again and again.

Mulling over all this, and muttering to himself in anger, Tikra was on his way back from the jungle. He was carrying a deer on his shoulder that he had just killed. Suddenly he saw the forest guard coming towards him. The guard pounced on Tikra and frowning at him, said, "So this is what you do, always hunting on the sly in the jungle! And I don't say anything! You want to go to the chowki and pay a fine or what?"

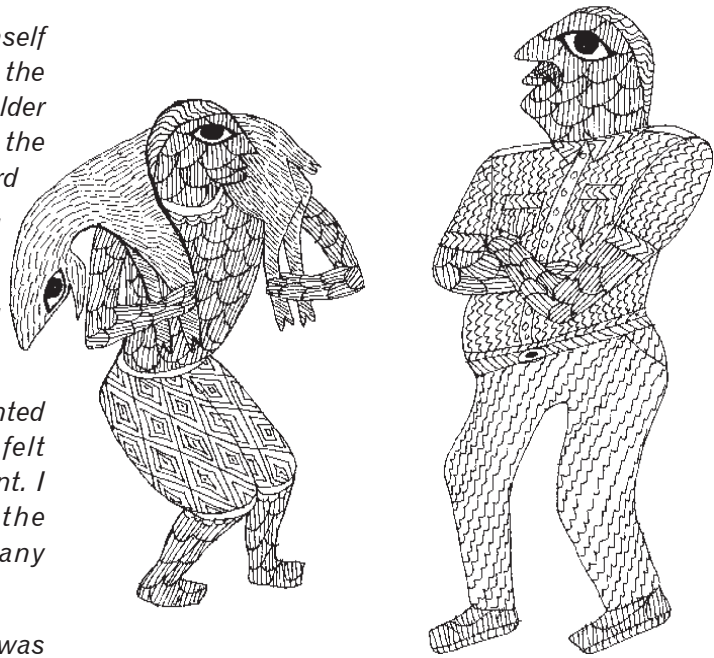
Tikra understood that the guard saheb wanted a gift. But for some reason, today he felt defiant. Boldly, he said, "Do what you want. I can't give you anything more. Even the moneylender doesn't lend me money any more!"

Defying the guard saheb in this manner was bound to have dire consequences. And it did, too. Tikra was caught by the guards and locked up in the check-post.

Mandia was desperate, and went to the moneylender, "Sethji, please lend me some more money. Tikra has been locked up, I have to get him released."

Ramchand Bisoi, the moneylender, smiled to himself. Many a dream floated before his eyes. He could see the days were now taking a turn for the better. The time seemed near when the tribal people would be left with nothing. Earlier they moved around all over the jungle, farming wherever they wanted. But now they kept coming to him to borrow money for all sorts of reasons. Even the jungle had slipped out of their hands.

Ramchand Bisoi had bought some land on the plain below. It was good land, but the problem was: who was to plough it? He could have had the land ploughed by other farmers or labourers, but now a better solution occurred to him. Stroking his moustache, he said, "Look here, Mandia, your earlier debts are already so



much. And you haven't yet paid them back."

Mandia beseeched him, "No, sethji, please don't refuse."

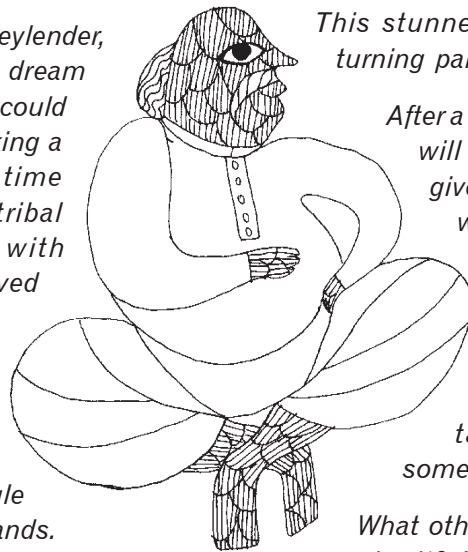
The moneylender said, "All right then, listen. Of the two of you brothers, one of you will have to become my bonded labourer."

This stunned Mandia. He retreated a step, turning pale.

After a while, the money-lender said, "You will have to work in my fields. I will give you food to eat. Every year I will write off two rupees from the debt. Every year I will add an interest of 8 annas per rupee. You will have to work for me for as many years as it takes to repay the loan. If you accept, you can take the money. Otherwise, go somewhere else."

What other option did Mandia have but to submit? He became the moneylender's bonded labourer. This was the only way that he could get Tikra released from the check post.

Why were the people of Degcha village forced to take more and more loans from the moneylender?



Why were the people not able to repay their debts?

What were the terms of bonded labour that Mandia accepted?

Do you think there was any way in which Mandia could have saved himself from bonded labour?

Do you know of any bonded labourers in these days? Who are they, what do they do, and whom do they work for? Find out with the help of your teacher.

Auctioning the land

A number of years had passed. Now, with the rest of the villagers, Tikra is walking down to a forest below the ghat. This is the year to farm the land below the ghat. This is the best land of the village. It is not too hilly. It has good soil. They had farmed below the ghat 22 years ago. Now a good, thick forest has sprung up there.

There is an axe on Tikra's shoulder, but within his chest his heart is sad. How much land can he break on his own? Who knows when Mandia will be able to return home!

Once they reached the forest below the ghat, the pradhan allotted the fields and everyone began cutting trees.

Within a few weeks the rainy season arrived and the fields were sown. Soon the crop was coming up.

Harvest time arrived. People went to the fields with their sickles, singing along the way. They were about to begin cutting the crop when they saw a stockily built man approach them with some police officers. The hands holding the sickles stopped in mid air. Anxious eyes stared at the man. They knew he was a big farmer from a village in the plain. He owned many a pair of bullocks and large tracts of land. People had sometimes seen him sitting at

Ramchand Bisoi's house. He was obviously good friends with the moneylender.

Nearing them, the man said to the police, "Look at this! Didn't I tell you? These people are farming on my land! They are encroaching! Arrest them."

Turning his face towards the people, the man shouted, "What are you doing standing there gaping with your mouth open like that? Drop your sickles and come to the thana. I've bought this land in the auction. It belongs to me."

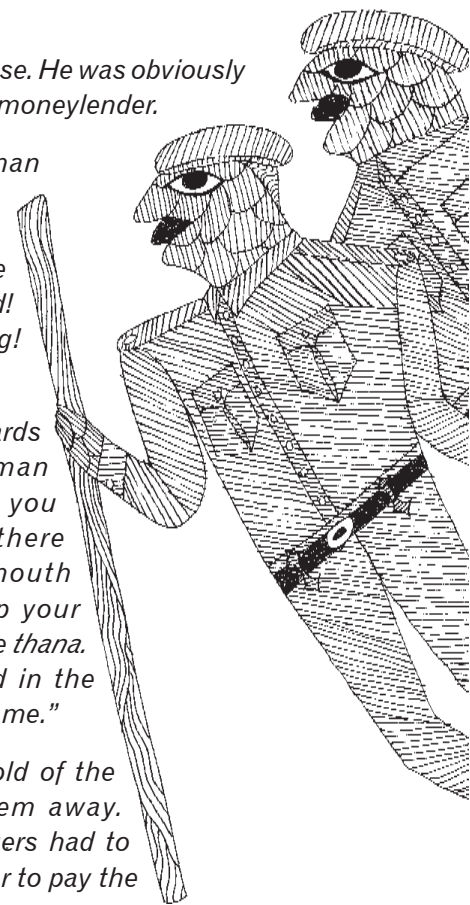
The police caught hold of the people and took them away. Once again the villagers had to borrow heavily in order to pay the fine.

Then they went to meet the forest guard. They said, "You had said we can farm in the jungle. What is this business about the auction of the land?"

The guard said, "Arrey, that land isn't a part of the government forest. It has been auctioned off by the government for farming. I don't have anything to do with it. You go and meet the tehsildar."

The people went and met the tehsildar. Now they were losing control over their tempers. Angrily, they said, "This land is our ancestors' land. We have been farming there all along. How could you put it up for auction just like that?"

The tehsildar retorted in a harsh voice, "Who says it's your ancestors' land? The land at Dumka Hill is registered in your name. For so many years this land below the ghat lay untitled. It was just jungle. No one was doing any farming over it. So we have auctioned it



off so that it can be farmed properly and we can get tax each year. The kind of farming you do can't go on any more. Why can't you understand this?"

The people shouted, "But no one even spoke to us! How could it be auctioned?"

The *tehsildar* said, "You think I will come all the way to your houses to tell you? There was a notice about the auction in the office. But you people, you are simply not aware of anything! What can I do? Now I don't want to see you here any more, get out!"

Before the auction, who owned the land

below the ghat?

Why was there a jungle on the land at the time of the auction?

Why did the government auction this land?

something written on a paper in the presence of two other men and had Tikra put his thumb print over it. Tikra brought the grain home. He was just getting his breath back when his wife Kajodi came running and said, "Listen, let's leave this place!. We can't possibly stay here any more!"

"Go? But where? What are you saying?" Tikra asked.

Kajodi told him that a contractor had come. "He is building a road for the Forest Department. He says he needs labourers. He will pay 2 rupees every month. Let's both of us work on building roads," Kajodi pleaded.

Tikra thought it over, "What Kajodi says is true. What is there here for us any more? The jungle is no longer ours, nor is the land. Our debt with the moneylender is impossible to pay. And if he wants the land on the Dumka hillock - well, let him have it!"

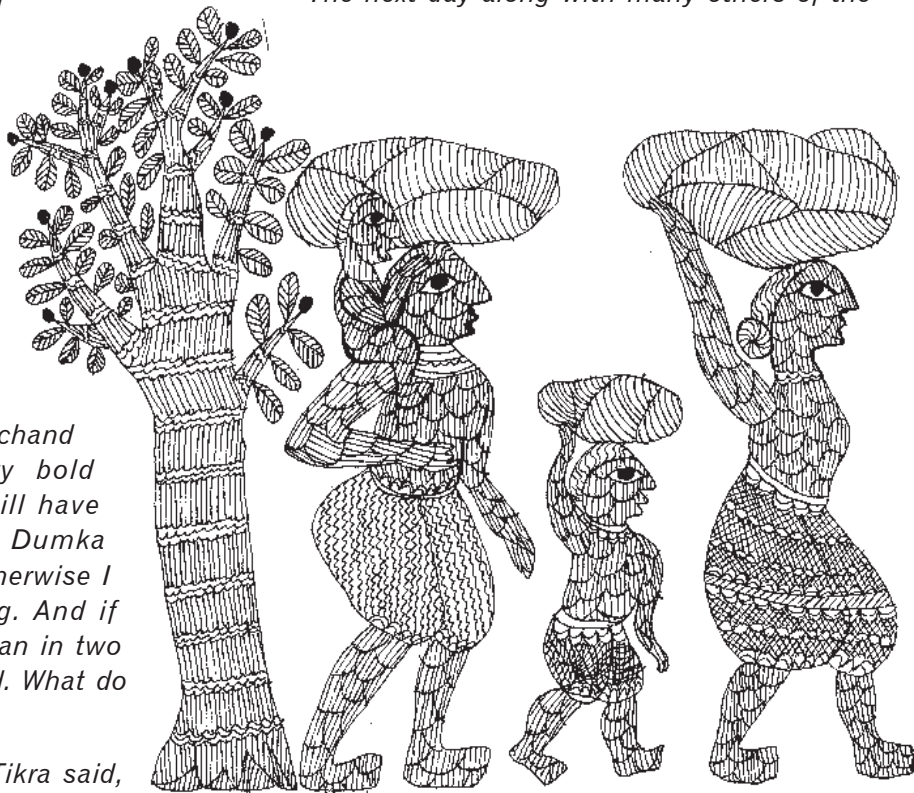
The life of a labourer

So it came to pass that someone else took away the crop the Degcha villagers had grown on this land below the ghat.

Thus, this year there was nothing to eat. Tikra went to the moneylender to borrow some grain. By now Ramchand Bisoi had become very bold indeed. He said, "You will have to mortgage the land at Dumka that is in your name. Otherwise I won't lend you anything. And if you can't pay back the loan in two years, I will keep the land. What do you say?"

What was there to say? Tikra said, "Yes," and the moneylender had

The next day along with many others of the



village, Tikra and Kajodi left to work as labourers on the road.

In the following months and years, their life was spent in heavy labour. At times they worked for wood contractors, cutting down the trees of the very forests where they once farmed. These trees were now being sold by contractors and used to build railway lines.

The villagers felt that they were no longer in control of their own lives. Their minds were filled with the anger that comes when everything you once had has been taken away from you, bit by bit.



One day they were working on a road near the town when a fakir passed by. He was singing as he went along:

"It will come, that day will also come.
All of them will run away, all of them -

the British, the
moneylenders, the
zamindars. Arrey,
the Santhals have
defeated them and
driven them away...
the Mundas are
driving them
away..."

Adivasi Revolts

We have seen how the conditions of the adivasi farmers who lived in the jungle worsened in British times. The Baiga, Muria, Gond and Bhil tribes of Madhya Pradesh, the Koya, Reddy, and Kolam tribes of Andhra Pradesh and the Saora adivasis of Orissa, were all no longer able to practice their old form of cultivation. They were having to become labourers for either the Forest Department or for contractors. Or they were becoming bonded labourers in the fields of moneylenders or farmers who had come from outside.

The places where roads and railway lines had reached became easy for people from outside to settle down and seize land. The power of the Forest Department also increased. Fining and beating up people at the smallest pretext, forcibly entering into people's homes to take away their things, ill-treating women, taking bribes, getting *begar* done by people - all this became common.

Against such adverse circumstances, the adivasis protested in many places. During the protests they would burn down many police stations, posts of the Forest Department and houses of the moneylenders. In many places they would set fire to the entire jungle. Such protests were

made by the Santhal adivasis in Bihar in 1856, by the Koya adivasis of Andhra in 1880 and 1922, by the Maria and Muria adivasis of Bastar in 1910, and by the Gond and Kolam adivasis in 1940.



The Santhal Revolt

From the beginning, the Santhals of Bihar had been resisting and protesting against British rule. In 1855-56 there was a massive revolt in which the Santhals began looting and killing the zamindars and moneylenders. The Santhals declared that British rule had come to an end and they were making a free state of the Santhals. But the Santhals were armed only with bows and arrows, and they could not hold their own against the gun-bearing British army. By the end of a fierce battle, 15,000 Santhals were killed and their revolt was finally suppressed.

The Revolt Led by Birsa Munda

Between 1874 and 1901, the Munda adivasis of the Chhotanagpur Plateau, which is now in the state of Jharkhand, came together under the leadership of a young man named Birsa to do away with British rule. Birsa was thought of as *bhagwaan* - god - and people were willing to follow his every word. They wanted to do away with the foreign government that protected the zamindars, the moneylenders and the courts of law that had deprived the Mundas of their lands and their rights over their forests. In the end, the Munda rebellion was suppressed by arresting the leaders and putting them behind bars. Birsa Munda died in prison in 1900. However, the government then felt compelled to make laws to protect the rights of the adivasis of Chhotanagpur.

Birsa Munda captured by the British police.



Sita Ram Raju and the Koya Adivasis

In Andhra Pradesh, the Forest Department made adivasis do forced labour for making roads. The Koya adivasis revolted in protest against this. They formed their own army and fought against the British for two years. Their leader was Alluri Sita Ram Raju. In the end Sita Ram Raju was arrested and killed, and the revolt was suppressed in 1924.



Forest revolt in Kumaon (1921-22)

In the Kumaon region of Uttar Pradesh, the peasants refused to cooperate with the Forest Department in protest against the fact that their rights over the forest were being taken away by the government. They openly broke the rules of the Forest Department. Attempts were made to burn the jungles used by contractors. The people refused to do forced labour for the Forest Department.

Because of these movements the British government had to change its policies. In many places they made their rules less strict. In some areas they made new laws saying that people from outside could not purchase the land of the adivasis.



Women in the Chipko Movement (1973-74) preventing trees from being cut.

Rights over the Forests after Independence

After independence the Government of India has continued the policy of reserving forests and restricting their use by the people. We have read how this policy is considered necessary to preserve forests for industrial use. But these restrictions cause a lot of problems for adivasi villagers who also depend on the forests.

Forests need to be used for fulfilling people's daily needs as well as the needs of industry. Problems arising from these overlapping and conflicting demands have still not been resolved.

After independence, many new industries that use wood have been set up. Factories use wood to make paper, sports goods, packaging, furniture etc. Thus the amount of forested land is rapidly decreasing.

Besides the social and economic effects we have been discussing, deforestation has also had far reaching effects on our environment. It has contributed to a number of problems related to water resources, soil quality, wildlife and climate.

In your area, where do people get wood for cooking and how do they get it?

Nowadays what are the obstacles that people face in obtaining things from the jungle and how does it compare with the situation during British times?

Find out how and why deforestation affects our environment.

Exercises



- 1(a) **How did people use the forests before the rule of the British?**
Why was there less danger of the forests being fully destroyed in those days?
- 1(b) **When and why did the danger of the destruction of forests arise?**
2. **What impact did the rules of the Forest Department have on the use of forest by the adivasis?**
3. **Why did the British government want to spread agriculture and what steps did it take to do this?**
How did it affect the farming practices of the adivasis?
4. **Explain why adivasis were forced to take loans from moneylenders in British times.**
5. **What kind of labour did the tribal people have to do to earn their livelihood after they were forced to give up their rights over forests?**
- 6(a) **Against whom did the adivasis revolt? In what ways did they demonstrate their anger and protest? Give some examples.**
- 6(b) **How were the revolts of the adivasis suppressed by the British?**
7. **Make a timeline to show when adivasi protests occurred in different parts of India. Find out where each of these adivasi struggles took place, and mark their locations on a map of India.**
8. **Debate in class what a suitable forest policy would be for India at present. Try to suggest some ways that forests could be preserved and wisely used by both industries and local people.**

CHAPTER 6

The Middle Class

during British Rule

During British rule many English medium schools and colleges were established. By 1900 there were thousands of English educated teachers, lawyers, doctors, journalists and government officials. These educated, relatively well-off Indians came to be known as the middle class. They lived mainly in cities and towns.


Despite the opportunities available to them, the Indian middle class still remained in some ways

lower class than the British. They all had to face many common problems which they tried to overcome through a collective struggle.

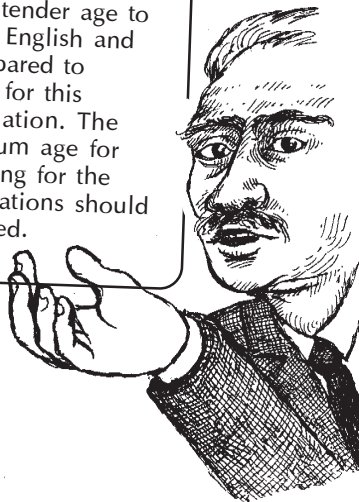
Many of these educated middle class people got together in 1885 to form an organisation called the Indian National Congress. They tried to direct the attention of the government towards their problems and the problems of other sections of Indian society through this organisation.

We do not get Equal Opportunities for Government Jobs

The educated people pointed out the shortcomings in the selection procedure for government jobs, saying it was discriminatory.



All senior officers in the government are British. On the one hand, the government says anyone can sit for the competitive examinations and become an officer. On the other hand, it has made it difficult for us Indians to even appear for these examinations. Do you think it is easy for an Indian to sit for an examination that is held in London? These examinations should be held in India as well as London.



The maximum age for appearing for these examinations is 19. It is just not possible for an Indian at this tender age to master English and be prepared to appear for this examination. The maximum age for appearing for the examinations should be raised.

Discuss the importance of the above two demands. Do they seem justified to you?

Are we not Equal Human Beings?

The educated people criticised the discriminatory behaviour of the British. They put forward many examples of such discrimination.

“The British don’t even consider us equal human beings,” they said. “To all appearances, all are equal in the eyes of the law. But if a Britisher commits a crime, Indian judges cannot punish him, while British judges can sentence Indians.”

“We also see that a Britisher usually gets away with a lighter sentence than an Indian for committing the same crime. “



“In government service when an Indian officer is due for promotion, it is the British officer who is promoted instead.”

“In railway coaches, hotels, cinema halls, parks and other public places there are signs such as, ‘For the British only’, ‘Dogs and Indians not allowed’ etc. How can we stomach this insult?”

“We are, at least, well to do and educated. The British behave even worse with poor, uneducated Indians. They beat their Indian servants at the slightest pretext, even to the extent of killing them. They even shoot their servants over trivial matters, yet nothing happens to them.”

The Indians did not have the same opportunities as the British to get ahead in life and live with respect. They resented such discrimination. Especially those educated middle class people who were striving to become the equals of the British began to speak out strongly against discrimination.



Indians serving a British couple in the 1800's.

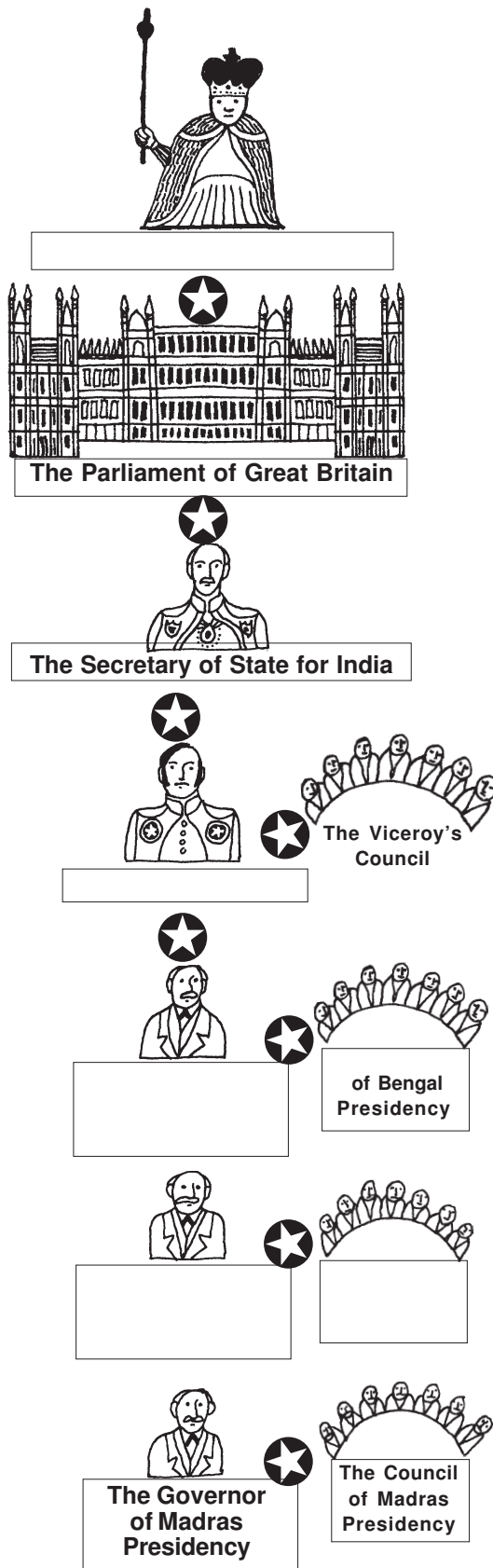
The educated people also began questioning the way the administration was run. Let's see how India was governed during British rule.

The British System of Administration in India

India was part of the British Empire. Hence the Queen of Great Britain was our queen and the people of India were her subjects.

The Queen of Great Britain and the British Parliament and Government ruled over India. However, it was not possible to rule India directly from Britain because India was so far away. So the responsibility of governing the country was given to a few officials. The highest official was called the Secretary of State for India. He lived in Britain.

The Hierarchy of British Rule in India



The highest official living in India to look after the administration was called the Viceroy. He was responsible for British rule in India.

But it was not possible for the Viceroy alone to pay attention to all issues, take all decisions, and implement them. To help and advise him there was a Council. The members of the Council were important British officials.

In order to run the administration of such a vast country, the British had divided their Empire in India into three parts: the Bengal Presidency, the Madras Presidency and the Bombay Presidency. A Governor was appointed in each presidency, and a Council was formed to aid and advise each Governor. The main government officials of these presidencies were members of these Councils.

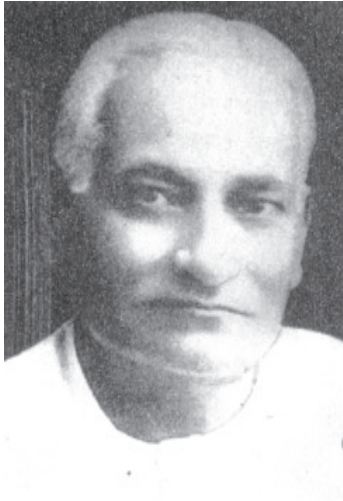
Fill in the boxes in the diagram on the left to label each level in the hierarchy of British rule.

Participation of Indians in the Administration of India

In the beginning the British officials ran the entire administration. But after the Revolt of 1857, the British government began to think that if it did not include Indians in running the administration, the people of India would not accept British rule and would keep revolting. That is why in 1861 a rule was made that in the Councils of the Viceroy and the Governors, apart from the British, other people would also be included as members and some of the members would be Indian. Thus, apart from officials, some Indians and British traders, mill owners and plantation owners began to be made members of the Councils.

The educated people of India were not at all satisfied with this rule. They would say:

“Indians have no doubt been included in the Councils, but this is only a token. The largest number of members in the Council are in any case still British!”



Motilal Nehru

“We do not want that the Viceroy or Governor should choose the members of the Council as they please. The members of the Council should be elected by the people.”

“Besides, the Indians who are in the Council can make no big difference because the Viceroy is the one who appoints and dismisses the members. Thus, he selects only those Indians who will support the British government.

“The Viceroy has made many Indians - rajas, nawabs, their divans and zamindars - members of his Council. These people do not understand the miseries of the common people of India nor do they complain to the British government in the interests of the people. What is the use of their being in the Council?”



Chittaranjan Das



Surendra Nath Bannerjee

People pointed out that, “In Britain the members of the parliament are elected by the citizens of Britain. They become representatives of the people. This is a very good thing. The people of India should also get this right to elect their representatives and express their views to the government through them. Only then will the real problems of the people be listened to and solved.”

Many members of the Congress such as S. N. Bannerjee, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and others raised these issues with the British government.

If you were the Viceroy of India, could the Governor of Madras Presidency tell you what to do?

If you were the Governor of Bengal Presidency and the Queen of Britain said you should construct a new monument in Kolkata, would you have had to follow her orders?

How were the members of the Councils chosen?

What shortcomings did the educated people see in the membership of the Council?

What suggestions did they have to remove these shortcomings?

If you were a British member of the Viceroy's Council at that time, how would you feel about the different methods of selecting members of the government in Britain and in India?

Now suppose you were a member of the Indian middle class at that time. Would you agree with the opinions of the above British member? Give reasons.

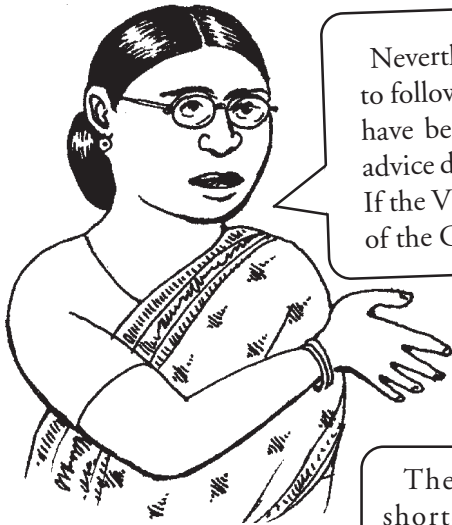
The Rights of the Council

The educated people of India also raised questions on the ways in which the Councils worked. Let's find out what these questions were.

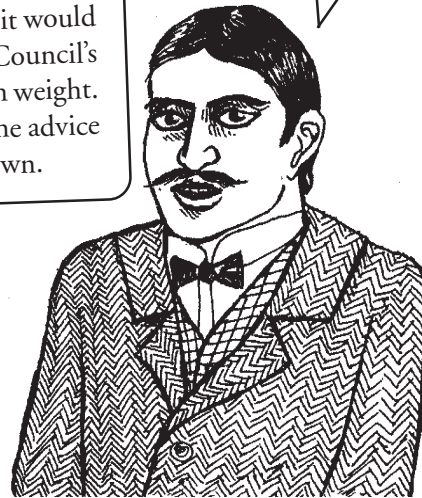


Even if the number of Indians in the Councils is increased, of what use will that be? The Council does not have any right anyway. The only job it has is that if the Viceroy or the Governor puts something for discussion in the Council, the Council discusses it and gives its opinion.

If the members of the Council want to initiate a discussion on any topic, they have to ask for the permission of the government. If the Governor or the Viceroy refuses, then the members cannot discuss that issue. Of what use is such a Council?

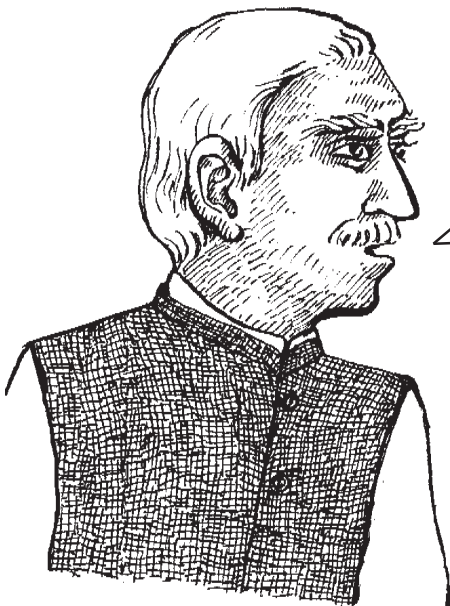


Nevertheless, if the government was bound to follow the advice of the Council it would have been of some use. But the Council's advice does not have even this much weight. If the Viceroy wants he can reject the advice of the Council and decide on his own.



The most serious shortcoming of the system is that the members of the Council cannot raise any question on the budget of the government. The government obtains money by taxing us and then spends it according to its own will. The money is ours! It should compulsorily take our opinion on how much will be claimed in taxes and on what it will be spent.

***In what ways was the Viceroy able to control and dominate the Council?
Discuss and explain.***



The Government of the People

From this we can understand how discontented the educated people of India were with the way in which the British ran the administration. They wanted that just as the government of Britain was answerable to the people there, the government in India too should be answerable to the people of India.

In the beginning some educated people hoped that the British would teach Indians how to form and run a responsible government. But this hope was lost very soon and people came to understand that although the British did talk of the development of the people of India, they ruled only for the development of their own empire.

Britain was ruling India for its own interests, and not in the interests of Indians. That was why it was not possible for the British to give a full share in the administration to Indians.

As a result of the pressure exerted by the educated Indians, some administrative changes were made from time to time. In 1861, 1892, 1919, and 1935, laws were made that marginally increased the participation and rights of Indians in the administration.

But during this time it had become clear that if the government had to be run in the interests of the Indian people, first India would have to be free from British rule. So people began fighting for self-rule and built up the National Movement to overthrow the British Empire and establish a free nation of Indians.

After Independence

Based on your experience and knowledge, discuss which of the problems raised by the educated people of the middle class have now been solved. Do Indians now get full opportunities for jobs? Who has control over the government of the country?

Exercises

- 1. During British rule why was it difficult for Indians to obtain government service?**
- 2. In what ways was there discrimination between the British and the Indians?**
- 3. What prevented Indians from exercising control over the British government in India?**
- 4. If the Council of the Bombay Presidency asked the Viceroy's Council to provide funds to construct a new railway line from Bombay to Pune, would the Viceroy's Council have to agree?**
- 5. If the Secretary of State for India asked the Viceroy to build a new railway line from Kalka to Simla, would the Viceroy have to agree?**
- 6. The people of India wanted to have a say in their own governance. Why was this not possible without independence?**



Chapter 5

Industry and Labour

under British Rule

The Fame of Indian Cotton

From early times in history, cloth woven in India was famous in different parts of the world. Traders from many places - Arabia, Africa, Indonesia, China etc. and from the 16th century - also from Britain, France, Holland, Portugal etc. - would make their way to India to buy a variety of textiles, such as the very finely woven muslin cloth, the colourfully printed 'chintz' cloth and so on. From the 16th century the demand for Indian textiles increased considerably and the traders earned good profit by selling it. The weavers were given a lot of work by the traders. They were busy all the time weaving cloth on their hand-loom for many different kinds of customers - who could be rich or poor, Indian or foreign. However, only a small portion of the money earned would reach the weavers who made the cloth.



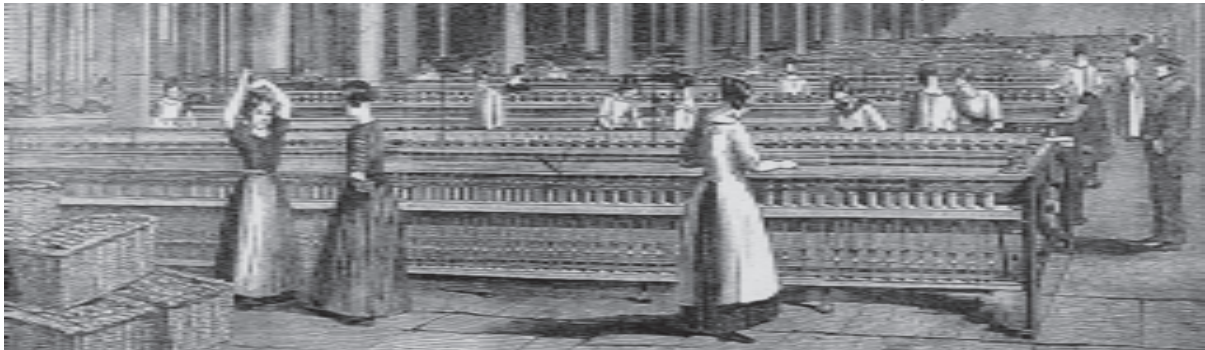
An 18th century European costume made out of Indian cloth.

A Setback for Indian Weavers

Some very significant developments took place in Britain that led to a reduction in the demand for Indian cloth all over the world. Around 1750 and afterwards, factories began to be established in Britain and spinning and weaving of cloth began to be done on machines. They built on and improved the methods used to produce cloth in India and other parts of the world, and mechanised the production of textiles.

Cloth made in the factories came for sale in the markets. To promote the development and sale of factory-made cloth, the British government imposed a special tax on cloth that came from India which the people in Britain had to pay. Why did they do this? The tax made cloth from India more expensive. This helped increase the sales of factory-made cloth. Over a period of time there were many improvements and new inventions of machinery. Thus, factories could produce cheaper cloth in very large quantities.

Britain, 1851: Cotton was spun into yarn in huge mechanised cotton mills like this. Men, women, and children used to work long hours in such factories.



This painting from around 1792 shows weavers in Bengal who produced cotton cloth for export by the East India Company. By 1850 many such weavers had lost their business due to competition from machine-made cloth from Britain.

Can you imagine what it would be like to work in a place like the one shown in this picture? How would it compare with a job in the huge cotton mill shown on the previous page? Write an account of what it would be like to work in each place.



As a result of these developments the demand for Indian cloth fell in Britain. The factory owners and traders of Britain also made efforts to sell their goods all over the world. Traders from Britain brought cloth made in British factories to be sold in India as well. In those days, British rule was being established in India. Hence the traders had the support of the government. As a result of their efforts, cloth made in British factories began to be sold in India too. In cities like Kolkata (Calcutta), Chennai (Madras), and Mumbai (Bombay) British cloth became very popular. Being very cheap, the factory-made cloth began to be sold in the villages as well. Naturally, all this badly affected the weavers of India. Abroad and at home, factory-made cloth stole a large number of their customers.

Not only this, the business of artisans who did spinning of cotton was also badly hurt, because in addition to cloth, cheap and fine spun cotton yarn (thread) made in the British factories also came in large quantities to be sold in India. Now Indians began using this foreign thread for weaving and would buy less thread from Indian spinners.

The Industrial Revolution

With time, mechanised factories producing other things also started coming up in Britain and other countries of Europe. Matches, cement, paper, nuts and bolts, utensils, pens, pencils, pins, combs, soaps, oil - all these would be brought from Britain to be sold in India. The British government of India would import most of the things it needed from Britain. From paper and ink to things needed for constructing buildings and railways, a large amount of materials would be imported from Britain.

This was the period of industrialisation in Europe. It is also called the Industrial Revolution. Things were being produced with new machines, new techniques, and new methods of working. Compared to things made in the old ways, these would be produced in much larger quantities and very cheaply.

In what way was the business of Indian weavers and spinners affected during British rule?

Hopes and Challenges for the Development of Industry in India

Due to competition from factory-made goods, the demand for things made by Indian artisans began falling and their business began to suffer badly. However, many merchants, traders and educated people in India thought, "Why should Indians not establish modern factories in India itself and produce things using machines?" A hope arose in their hearts that the people of India could also learn and develop new science and technology and set up factories with the help of the British... maybe the kind of industrial development that had taken place in Britain could also happen in India!

To begin with, some enthusiastic and enterprising people tried to set up a few factories. But they were not very successful. In order to run a factory, it was necessary to have knowledge, experience, machines and money. It was not easy to mobilise all this together.

Not only this, the wealthy Indians and Britishers who were involved in trade had their attention focused entirely on foreign trade. Bringing goods produced abroad for sale in India and selling raw material from India to foreign countries - this had become a very profitable business indeed.

Large European companies had invested money in this business and the merchants and traders of India were also assisting them.

European companies had developed plantations of opium, indigo, coffee and tea in India. They would grow these crops, pack them up and send

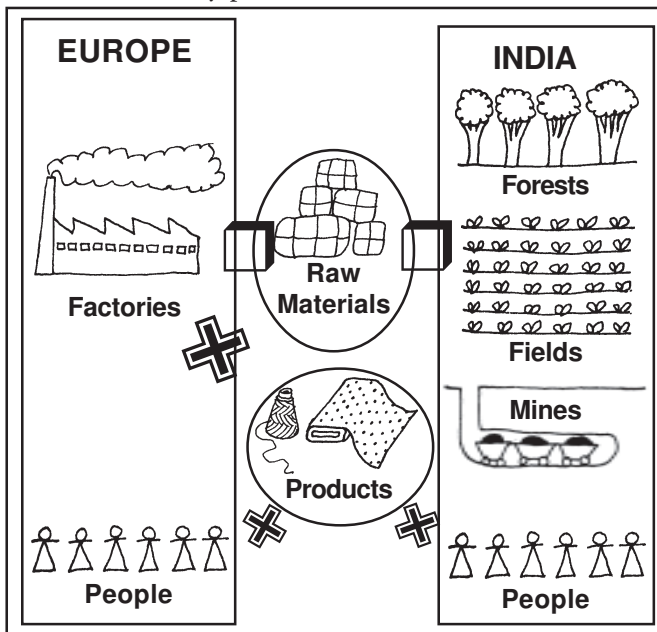
them off on their ships to be sold in Europe. These companies would also buy jute from Bengal and cotton from Maharashtra, and send these to the factories of Britain. Foodgrains, oilseeds, hides and skins were also exported. Coalmines were developed in Bihar and Bengal so that railways and steamers



This picture was used in an advertisement in the early 1900s in order to popularise tea drinking in Britain as well as in India. The British made large profits from tea plantations in places such as Darjeeling.

could run. Railways and steamers were essential for merchants to collect and send out raw material from India, as well as transport goods made in British factories to all places in India.

Wealthy people would rather use their money to invest in foreign trade because profit was more certain in it. On the other hand, though the raw materials and cheap labour needed to set up factories were easily available in India, it still seemed quite risky to do so.



TRADE: Describe what each arrow in the picture is trying to show. Can you draw a similar picture that will show the kind of changes many Indians dreamt of bringing about?

There was no assurance that Indian factories would be successful against the competition from British factories. There was always a fear that the goods that had come from Britain would be sold more cheaply than things made in Indian factories, and therefore no one would buy the Indian goods. In such a situation, if the government could support the development of industries in India, much could be done.

Discuss the factors that were encouraging and those that were discouraging the growth of industries in India.

The British Government's Policy

In the 1850's some Indian cloth mills were set up with much courage, first in Mumbai and then in Ahmedabad. Thus cloth came to be made on machines in India too! Some educated people and factory owners demanded that a special tax be levied on cloth coming from Britain so that the cloth being made in India might get a protected market. The special tax would make the British cloth more expensive and this would encourage the sale of cloth produced in Indian factories.

Some Marwari traders from Calcutta (now Kolkata) maintaining business related accounts.



You know that in Britain the government had levied a special tax on cloth made by Indian weavers in order to help the cloth industry of Britain. But the government refused to levy a similar tax in India on British cloth to help Indian industry. The pressure of the British factory owners and traders on the government was so much that it could do nothing against their interests.

In the year 1896, the British government of India experienced a severe reduction in its income. The government began to think of ways in which it could increase its income. It was then, in its hour of difficulty, that the government levied a three and a half percent tax on cloth coming to India from Britain. But in order that this might not harm the sale of British cloth, the government simultaneously levied the same amount of tax (three and a half percent) on cloth being made in India as well.

This tax became the cause of a long drawn conflict between the Indian people and the British government. By imposing a tax on goods made in Indian factories, the government had made it clear that it would protect mainly the interests of the British factories. There was strong opposition to this tax in India and a persistent demand to remove it.

Discuss what 'protected market' means.

The Indians demanded that a tax be imposed on British goods coming to India. Do you think this was a fair demand? Should the government have treated British and Indian industries equally?

Even without government protection, factories producing cloth, thread, sugar, jute, paper, matches, cement etc. were set up in India. Their rapid development, however, took place only after 1914.

Indian Industry During The First World War

During the First World War (from 1914 to 1918), the import of foreign goods into India fell sharply. One reason was that **cargo** ships were diverted to war related duties, and hence there was a shortage of ships. Also, in the factories of Europe, things needed for the war were being made - so fewer goods meant for the Indian markets were available.

Under these circumstances, the factories that had been established in India started selling their goods in greater quantities. Enthused by these heavy sales there was a rapid development of industries. After the war came to an end, European machines were purchased in large numbers for Indian factories and new industries were set up. Indian industrialists began demanding very forcefully that the government levy a tax on foreign goods so that the higher sales of Indian goods might continue in future as well.

For many reasons the government had to accept this demand. After 1917, taxes were levied on numerous foreign goods, one after the other. As a result, factories set up in India were able to develop speedily.

Why did a rapid development take place in Indian industry during the First World War?



Indian troops in France, 1916. The British had around 14 lakh Indian soldiers fighting for them in the First World War. Although the war was a boon for industry, it was a tragedy for most people. Throughout the world about one crore people died on the battlefields, and another two crore died of hunger and disease related to the war.

Problems of Indian Industry at the Time of Independence

After a long struggle, Indian industry had got a little help from the British government. Yet, a very large number of factories, banks, ships etc. were in the hands of Europeans, not in the hands of

J.N. Tata, R.D. Tata, Sir R.J. Tata and Sir D.J. Tata - some of the pioneers among Indian industrialists.



Indians. Being European had many advantages for these companies. They had easy access to all types of officers and authorities of the British government, whereas Indians were never likely to have such reach. All the foreign trade was in the hands of European companies, hence, they had no shortage of funds either.

Despite the influence of the Europeans, Indian industrialists advanced a great deal. For example Indian industrialists were in control of the textile industry. The greatest example of the achievements of Indian industrialists was the setting up of a steel factory at Jamshedpur by an industrialist named Jamshedji Tata.

The help received by Indian industrialists from the government in the form of a tax on foreign goods, was important but hardly adequate. Many resources and facilities were needed such as railways, roads, electricity, coal and iron. However, the British government did not pay adequate attention to development in these areas.

Indian industrialists also had to buy all their machines from abroad. Industries that would manufacture machinery had simply not started in India.

For the development of industry, help was needed from scientists, engineers, and technicians.

Educated workers at all levels were needed. But education was not given adequate importance in India. Foreigners had to be relied on for industrial development because the number of Indian scientists and engineers was very small. Even after independence, the disregard for education resulted in a poorly educated workforce that continued to hamper industrial development.

In order to promote the interests of Indian industry, many organisations of industrialists were formed even during British times. One of the most important was the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI). Such organisations would keep bringing up the problems of the industrialists before the government.

What industries were established in India during British rule?

What were the difficulties in the development of Indian industries at the time of Independence?

With the end of the British rule in India and the formation of a free government of Indians the situation changed. The government of India gave encouragement to the growth of industries in a planned fashion. You will read about this in detail in another chapter.

Labourers in Indian Industries

Industrial Towns and Labour Settlements

From 1850 onwards, machine-based industries had begun to be set up in India. The biggest industry was the spinning and weaving of textiles. In 1905, around 2.25 lakh labourers were in the textile industry, 1.5 lakh in the jute industry and about 1 lakh in coalmines.

Needy farmers, labourers and artisans had begun coming from the villages to the cities in the hope of employment. Along with them or after them came their relatives, neighbours, and friends. The number of labourers in cities mounted. All around factories, huts and tenements of labourers sprang up. Many cities of India, such as Kanpur, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Chennai became large industrial cities.

Work Conditions

In the early phase, work in the mills would begin every day at dawn, and come to a halt only at sundown. Waking from sleep before the light of day, long rows of labourers could soon be seen wending their way towards the mills - men as well as women and even children.



Once they began work on the machines there was no question of stopping. There was no fixed break even for meals. Taking out 15 - 20 minutes from their work, and asking a fellow labourer to look after their work, the labourers would eat their food. There was no separate place to eat either.

The whole day would pass in the heat, humidity, noise, dust and suffocation of the mill. Only when the sun set and it became impossible to see in the dark, the machines would stop and work would end.

This would go on for months. Even a weekly holiday was not in the rules. Only for the major festivals of the year would the mill owner give a holiday.

However it is not possible to work every day of the year. Illnesses and family duties have to be attended to. People also get exhausted and tired of monotonous work. But whenever a labourer did not go to work, the day's wage would be lost.

In those days payment was made in proportion to the amount of goods produced. The owners laid the condition that "as much as you make, so much will you be paid." Sometimes things went wrong with the machines, or the supply of raw material was delayed or it was inadequate. Although this was not the fault or the responsibility of the labourer, yet the mill owners would deduct the

labourer's money. Thus, labourers were not able to get any fixed income each month.

Not only that, at the end of the month, the mill owner would not even make the full payment to the labourers. He would keep some money till the end of the next month. In such a situation if labourers wanted to leave the work and

go away they could not - because their earlier month's wages were still stuck with the owner.

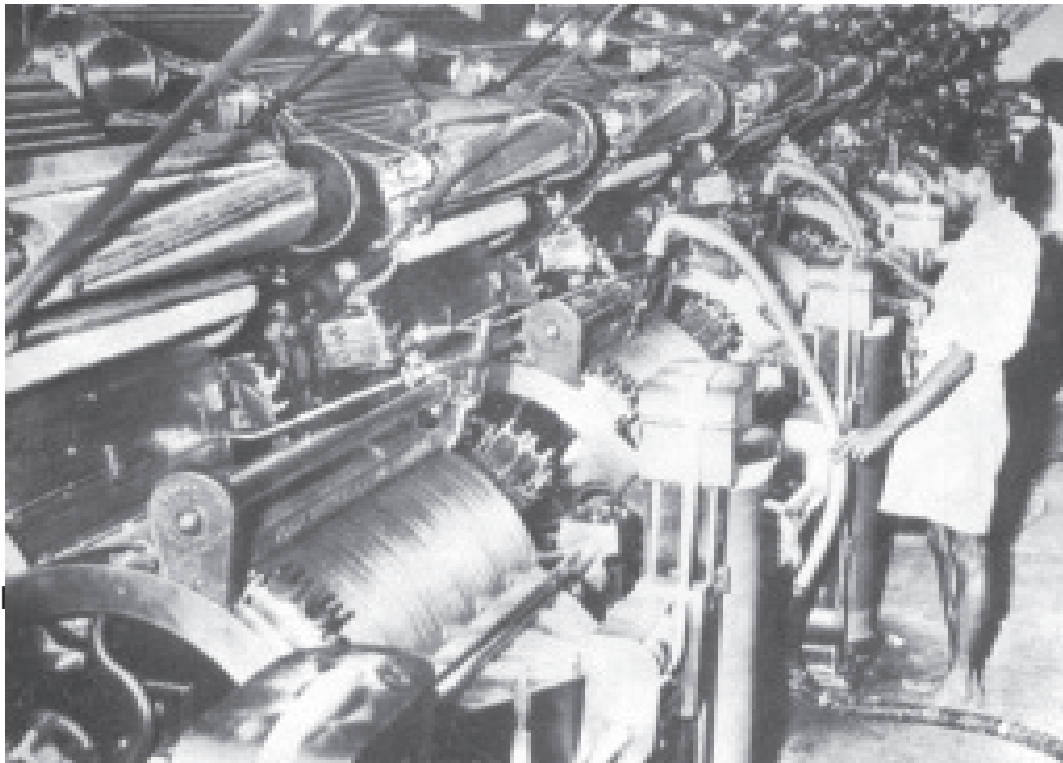
There were also plenty of fines. The owners would fine the labourers on the smallest pretext - if they came late, if the cloth got spoilt, if the owner thought the labourer did not work sincerely - there would be fines and they were deducted from the month's wages.

All the labourers - men, women, children - had to work under such conditions for 14 hours in the summers and 12 hours in the winters.



A street scene of Bombay (now Mumbai) in the mid-19th century.

Interior of a textile mill in Coimbatore in the 1940s.



Then, in 1880 something new happened. Electric bulbs began to be fitted in the mills. As the hours of light increased, the hours of work also increased. Now it was not necessary to stop work when the sun set. And now it became common to take up to 15 hours of work each day from each labourer.

There were so many hardships at work and on top of it there was no security of employment either. If a mill suffered loss of profit, the owner would simply throw out some labourers and reduce the wages of those who continued to work.

However if the mill earned a profit, would the owner ever increase the wages? No, that hardly ever happened!

In the early days of factories in India:

What were the rules regarding work and rest for labourers?

What were the rules regarding payment of wages?

For what reasons would there be cuts and reductions in the labourers' wages?

Labourers' Struggles

Labourers struggled against their oppressive working conditions. From 1870 itself there was one strike after another in Mumbai. To begin with there were no organisations or unions of the labourers. The labourers of each mill would get together to go on strike and would put pressure on the owners.

For instance, in 1892, mill owners of Mumbai were thinking of making a reduction in the wages of labourers. In such a situation labourers

of all the mills geared themselves up for a struggle. The government had appointed an official for the inspection of factories. This is what the factory inspector wrote about the labourers: "If a reduction in the wages is actually made, it is possible that there will be an overall strike in Mumbai. Though there is no organized trade union of the labourers, most of the labourers belong to common castes, clans, villages and can easily unite and take steps."

Here's one example of how the labourers would struggle to protect their own interests. In 1900-1901, some 20 mills of Mumbai reduced the labourers' wages by 12½%. In response to this, 20,000 mill workers stopped work and came out on strike. All the 20 mills remained closed for 10 days.

Similarly in 1919, when the cost of living was rising but the labourer's wages were not being increased, the labourers of all the mills of Mumbai came out on strike and the mills were closed for 12 days.

The labourers not only fought for their wages, they also fought against the British for the freedom of India. In 1908, the British sentenced the famous Indian freedom fighter, Lokmanya Tilak, to 6 years of exile from India. In a flash, the labourers of all the mills of Mumbai went on strike against this for six days. In this way the labourers participated in the freedom struggle on many occasions through strikes.

Why did labourers go on strikes?

Why were strikes used instead of any other action?



A picture depicting a labour meeting **INDUSTRY 33**

Addressing Labourers' Problems

The strange thing was that in the beginning most of the educated people of India paid no heed to the problems of the labourers. What was uppermost in their minds was, how industries could be developed in India. In the earlier phase they did not think much about the kind of working conditions that should be there for labourers.

But even more amazing was that in Britain, factory owners, traders and social workers began to express concern over the conditions of Indian labourers. They began actively drawing the attention of the government to these problems.

The industrialists and social workers of Britain began putting pressure on the government that there should be laws to improve the condition of the labourers in India, similar to the laws in Britain. As a result of this pressure the government seriously began considering making a reduction in the working hours and making laws that would give labourers holidays.

This was deeply resented by the industrialists and educated people of India. They felt that once labourers were given fixed incomes and facilities such as leave, mill production would come down and the expenses of the owners would go up. This would in turn make the things produced in the factories more expensive. If this happened, goods coming from Britain would sell more easily and the development of Indian industries would come to a standstill.

Indian industrialists were suspicious that the British industrialists were just pretending to show concern for the welfare of the Indian labourers. Maybe they actually had their own interests in mind.

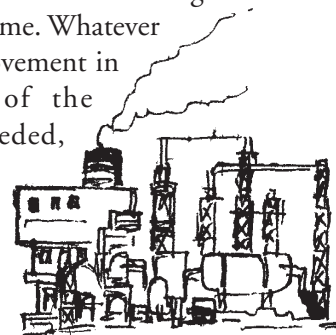
34 INDUSTRY



In 1931 these millworkers in Lancashire, England were happy to meet Gandhiji and express solidarity with the Indian freedom movement.

The educated people of India had also come to believe that if laws were made in the interests of the labourers, industries would not be able to develop in India. A few lines published in a major newspaper of Bengal in 1875 shows the thinking of those days: "Rather than this new industry be destroyed it is better that labourers keep dying in high numbers once our industries are well-established, then we can protect the interests of our labourers".

There was this fear in the minds of industrialists and the educated people, but it was not fully justified. Factories set up in India had begun to earn profits. New mills were being opened up all the time. Whatever the risks, an improvement in the conditions of the labourers was needed, because industrial development lay in the hands of the labourers.



Laws for the Welfare of Labourers

The government implemented the first Factory Act in 1881 and made the following rules especially for the welfare of working children:

- Children below the age of 7 cannot be employed in factories.
- Children between 7 and 12 years of age cannot be made to work more than 9 hours a day and they must be given a one-hour break each day. They must also be given 4 days leave each month.

The largest number of labourers in industries was that of men. In wasn't until 1911 that laws for their welfare were made. According to the Factory Act of 1911:

- Adult male labourers could not be made to work for more than 12 hours every day
- After every six hours of work there would be a break for half an hour.

India and Pakistan get Independence from Britain

In which year were you born? Mark it on this timeline. Also mark the births of your parents and some grandparents or other old relatives you can find out about..

Find out whether any of the people whose births you marked were affected by the labour laws.

1840

1850

The Revolt of 1857

1860

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

In 1891, laws were made in the interest of women labourers to ensure that:

- Women labourers cannot be made to work more than 11 hours a day.
- Women labourers must be given an hour and half break each day.
- Children's working hours were reduced from 9 to 7 hours/day and factory employers were forbidden to employ children below 9 years of age.

The British industrialists were against the development of factories in India, yet they took the side of Indian labourers. Why?

Why did the educated people of India not pay much attention to the interests of factory labourers in the beginning?

According to the labour laws what was the maximum number of hours that children, women and men could be expected to work?

Below what age could children not be employed as labourers in British times?

What do the present laws set as the minimum age, below which children cannot be employed as labourers?

How would the labour laws have affected the industrialists?

Labour Organisations

With time the problems of the labourers became well known. Some educated people began supporting the labourers and they began writing articles in newspapers to explain their problems to people. Small organisations for the welfare of labourers also started emerging.

During strikes labourers formed their own organisations with the help of some educated people. These were labour unions, formed to conduct the strikes and negotiate settlements with the mill owners. Slowly, the unions became active not just during the strikes but all around the year, promoting the workers' welfare and rights. Such unions began to be established from the early 1920's. People influenced by socialist thought were prominent among them. One such union formed was Girni Kamgar Union with help of which labourers of Mumbai went on a very effective strike in 1928. In Ahmedabad, under the influence of Gandhiji, a powerful union known as the Mazdoor Mahajan was formed.

The formation of labour unions made the government and mill owners very anxious. Now laws began to be made to put restrictions on strikes.

The government appointed labour officers to look after the welfare of the labourers. The government began making efforts to ensure that the labourers solve their problems through the labour officers, rather than go to the unions.

But the labourers did not agree to this. They considered it better to form their own organisations to protect their interests. In this way, a struggle continued between the labourers on the one hand and the government and factory owners on the other, on the question of the right to form unions and the right to go on strike.

Which were the two main labourers' unions to be formed in India during British times?

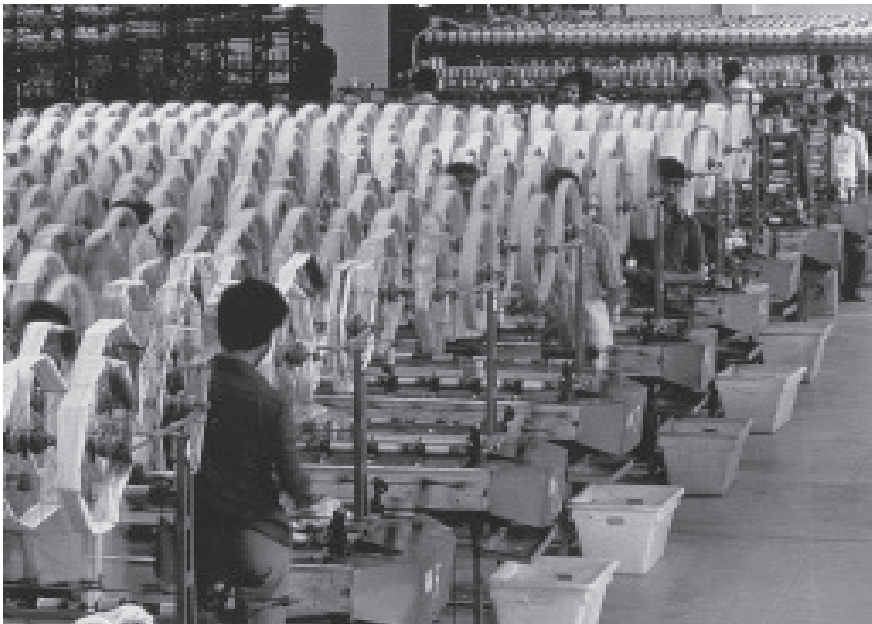
Why is a union or labourers' organisation important for labourers? Discuss.

After Independence

The struggles of the labourers are by no means over. Even today labourers take out processions and go on strikes to increase their wages, protect their jobs and to improve their working conditions. Through this kind of struggle labourers have succeeded in having laws made in their favour. But they also continue to struggle against laws that restrict strikes and the functioning of unions.

What are the present laws regarding maximum working hours and minimum wages of factory labourers?

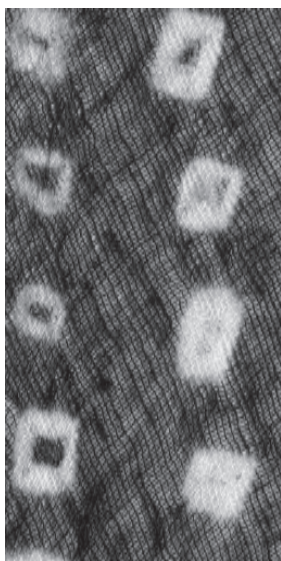
A present day silk factory



Exercises

1. *Why were the British interested in developing iron and coalmines in India? Make two lists to show how the British benefitted and how different classes of Indians benefitted from the mines.*
2. *If there had been no British rule in India would the business of the weavers have continued to flourish? Think of reasons why it would, as well as reasons why it wouldn't. Have a class discussion or debate.*
3. *Indians criticised the British government because it bought all the manufactured goods it needed from Britain. People said that this did not encourage industries in India. Why did they say this? Explain.*
4. *What problems did the Indian industrialists have with the British government?*
5. *During British rule, why was it easier for the European companies rather than Indian companies to set up industries? Give a few reasons.*
6. *When industries began to be set up in India why was the condition of the Indian labourers very poor? Explain in 10 sentences.*
7. *In the absence of unions, what did labourers do to protect their interests?*
8. *How were labour unions formed? What differences in the lives of the labourers did unions make? Think and write.*
9. *Labour laws were first made for child labourers, then for women labourers and last of all for men labourers. Why were these laws made and why were they made in this order?*
10. *How could education affect industrial development? Have a class discussion on this.*
11. *Match each of these names to the following samples of woven cloth:*

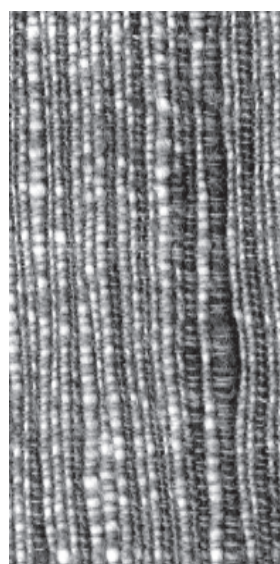
khadi



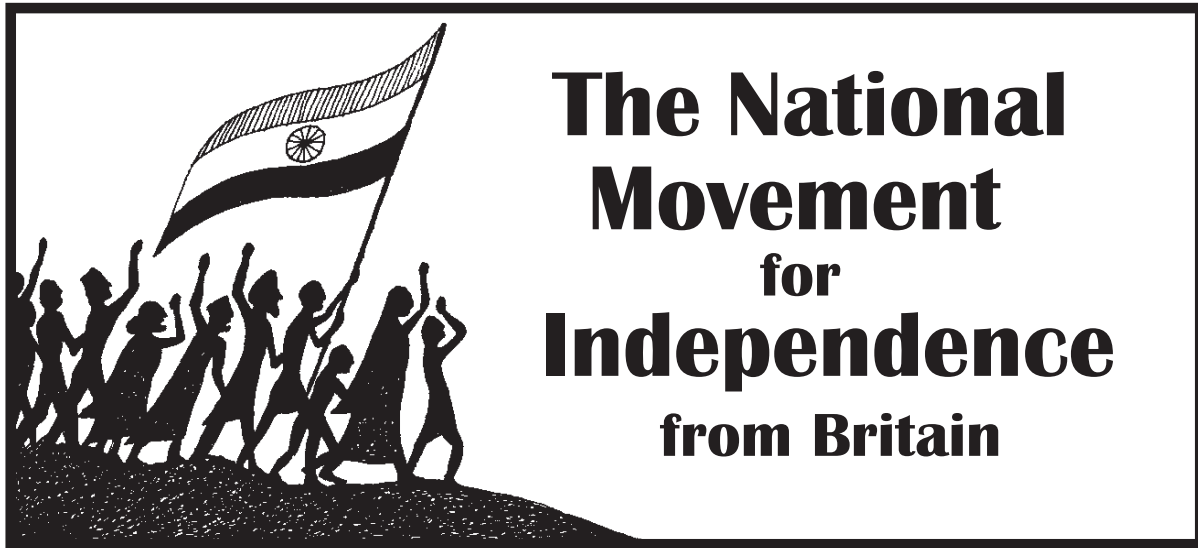
cotton tie and dye



baluchari silk



CHAPTER 7



What Kind of Independent India?

In the last few chapters we have been discussing the needs and problems of various classes of people in the Indian sub-continent from the mid 1700's until the mid 1900's. We have discussed how peasants, adivasis, industrialists, workers, women and middle class people were struggling to overcome their problems and improve the conditions of their lives.

What improvements did each of these groups of people want for themselves?

As time passed, people involved in different agitations and struggles got to know about each other. They all had to face problems due to British rule. So they began working together to remove British rule and establish a new free nation. After all, they would be more powerful and more likely to succeed if they were united into one movement. This was the National Movement of India. People of all sections and classes participated in it with the dream of building a better future for themselves in a new nation.

A number of complicated questions arose in people's minds when they began to dream of a new, independent nation.

One question was: What place would the different religious communities have in the new nation? Would Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, etc. all be given equal rights and equal importance? Or would Hindus have the highest place because they were the greatest in number? Some people formed organisations with the aim of carving out a better place just for their own community. These were known as communal organisations. The most important communal organisations were the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League.

Other questions that arose were: Would it be a nation for the zamindars or a nation for the peasants? Would it be for the mill owners or for the workers? For the adivasis or for the moneylenders? Some people had hopes of India developing on the Gandhian path. Others were making plans for development along capitalist lines. And other people wanted that free India should develop according to socialist ideals.

What does the Preamble of the Constitution of India tell you about the common understanding evolved by the people about the goals of the Indian nation?

Now let's read about the different approaches taken in the National Movement for independence and the phases it went through.

Government to fulfill its promises

You know that an All-India organisation of the educated people was formed in 1885 - the Indian National Congress. Every year this organisation held a three-day session in which representatives from each province of India would come to participate. Among them, some who came to be very well known were Surendra Nath Bannerjee, Firozeshah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

In these sessions of the Congress, the problems of all sections of people of the country would be discussed. The government policies would come in for criticism and proposals would be made for the kind of policy that the government should adopt.



Dadabhai Naoroji



M. G. Ranade

These early nationalist leaders analysed and exposed the character of British imperial rule in India. They showed that all the economic problems of the people of India were there because there was drain of wealth from India to Britain. They showed that the British were ruling over Indian people to serve their own interests and not as the rulers claimed, to help India become a modern and democratic self-governing country. They demanded that the British should implement in practice, what they claimed in their words. The Congress members would pass resolutions in their meetings and submit petitions to the British government to press for their demands.

From every corner of the country, newspapers being published by Indians also began discussing in detail various government policies and the problems faced by the people. It was hoped that the force of public opinion would make the British change their policies some day.

However, all these efforts did not affect the British government very much. The government felt that there was no need to pay heed to what a handful of educated people were saying.

Swarajya is Our Birthright

When it started becoming clear that the proposals and views of the Congress were not making any dent on the British government, the feeling of resentment grew stronger. Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote in his newspaper *Kesari*, “For twelve years we had cried ourselves hoarse, but nowhere has it touched the government.... Now it

is necessary that we educated people go from village to village, tell the people what their rights are and teach them to fight for these rights.”

Tilak clearly stated that any government can run only so long as it has the support of the people. He would tell the people, “You must get to know your own power. If you do not want this government, it cannot last. It is you who lay roads and railway tracks, it is you who run post offices,



who pay taxes. Do not live under the shadow of the British government’s mercy. Rise on your own strength so that you might win your rights.”

It was also Tilak who raised the inspiring slogan that was taken up by people everywhere: “Swarajya is my birthright and I shall have it.”

Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and many others also thought like this and spoke out in order to spread these ideas to others in Bengal and the Punjab. They came to be known as the extremist group (‘गरम दल’) in the National Movement. In contrast, people such as Ranade and Firozeshah stuck to their former methods, and came to be known as the moderate group (‘नरम दल’). People like Tilak and Annie Besant set up their organisations called Home Rule Leagues and opened their branches in many parts of the country. They organised lectures and discussion groups and distributed pamphlets to bring people together to fight for Home Rule or Swarajya.

What were the differences between the ideas and methods of the extremists and the moderates within the Congress?

The Boycott and Swadeshi Movements

Inspired by the desire to attain independence (स्वराज्य) on their own strength rather than wait for the British, the people launched two movements:

The first was to **boycott** (to refuse to buy) British-made goods such as cloth and sugar. The second was to use **swadeshi** things, that is only those things that were made by the people of our country. In 1905 the Boycott Movement and the Swadeshi Movement rapidly spread among the people.

That same year, the Viceroy of the British government, Lord Curzon, divided the Bengal Presidency into two parts. The Bengal Presidency

consisted of the areas that are now West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bihar, Orissa and parts of the Northeastern states. Hindus, Muslims, and people of other religions lived in the Bengal Presidency.

The two parts that were created by dividing Bengal Presidency were, West Bengal, which had more Hindus, and East Bengal, which had more Muslims. The effort to create a rift among the people of the country in this manner produced an immediate wave of angry protest. This further strengthened the efforts to resist British rule.

To show their protest, people boycotted foreign goods in huge quantities. In place after place, piles

of British-made cloth were set to fire. Because of this popular boycott, the import of British goods was greatly reduced. The Swadeshi Movement also began to catch on. Many people came forward to say, "We will set up our own industries, open our own colleges and schools, we will work among the people of the villages to solve their problems... we will run our own panchayats and courts...we will not remain dependent on the British for our development... we will develop on our own strength."

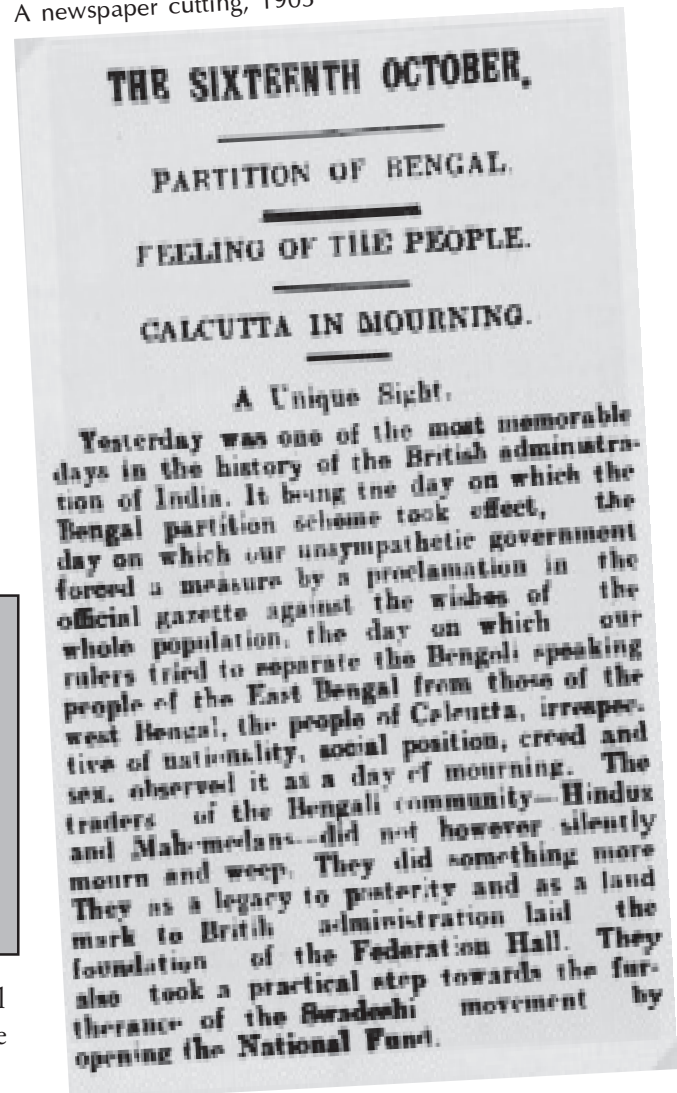
This was the sentiment behind swadeshi. Inspired by this, many schools, colleges, factories, panchayats etc. were started.

Why did people think that the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements would lead to swarajya for the country? Discuss.

Do you think the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements would actually have weakened the British? Or would the British have given it as little importance as they did to the views of the moderate leaders of the Congress? Make an assessment.

In any case, the British government did feel forced to cancel the partition of Bengal. The province was reunited in 1911.

A newspaper cutting, 1905



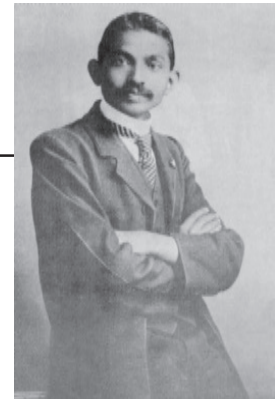
Revolutionary Terrorist Movements

Not everyone was convinced about the effectiveness of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements. Some felt that spreading swadeshi to obtain self-rule would take far too long. They felt that another way of fighting the British would be more effective. This was to acquire arms and kill the British officers. After all, there were only a handful of Britishers in each district. "If people resolve firmly, British rule can be wiped out in a day," wrote Aurobindo Ghosh in the newspaper *Yugantar*.

With this feeling, many secret organisations were formed and, inspired by love for the country and the desire to sacrifice for it, numerous young people joined them. They collected arms and ammunitions from home and abroad. For this they would even raid the government treasuries and armouries. Revolutionaries such as Khudiram Bose, Prafulla Chaki etc. became very famous for their

efforts to kill the British. Though they were arrested and hanged, their sacrifice drew people towards a deep love for the country.

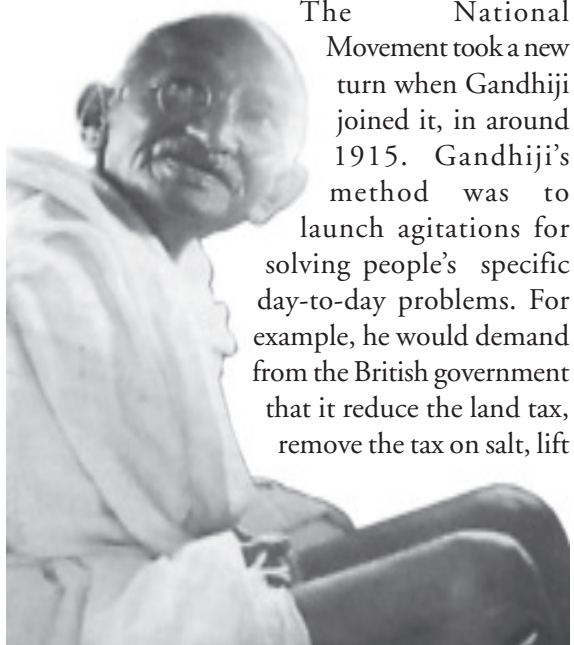
Do you agree with the views of Aurobindo Ghosh? Have a discussion in your class.



Ahimsa and Satyagraha

You must have learnt about Gandhiji and the important role played by him in the movement to free India from the British. It was his belief that if what we want is true, then we should be able to obtain it without force and violence - through ahimsa. Hence, we should only make an appeal towards the truth (**satyagraha**). It is not through violence that one should try to obtain truth.

Gandhiji made many programmes for launching satyagraha for swarajya. One such programme was **non-cooperation** - that people should refuse to cooperate with those who were unjust. The second was **civil disobedience** - that people should refuse to accept what they do not consider right (that is, they should disobey unjust rules and laws). We will discuss both of these in the following pages.



The National Movement took a new turn when Gandhiji joined it, in around 1915. Gandhiji's method was to launch agitations for solving people's specific day-to-day problems. For example, he would demand from the British government that it reduce the land tax, remove the tax on salt, lift

Gandhiji: above, as a lawyer in South Africa, and at left, wearing khadi. At right, a newspaper from 1919.

the restrictions on the use of the jungle, and stop the sale of liquor (the government earned a hefty income through the sale of liquor). Under the leadership of Gandhiji, people would take to the roads in thousands to agitate for the solutions to their concrete problems. Thus, large numbers of people became involved in resisting the British government. Prior to this, never had the common people joined the National Movement in such large numbers.

It was also Gandhiji who launched the campaign to remove untouchability in the country so that those who had always been rejected could take part in the movement for a new nation.

You may have read about the life of Gandhiji in detail and would have come to understand many such things of his life. Read the section above and point out what important aspects Gandhiji added to the National Movement.



Protest against the Rowlatt Act

After 1915, as the demand for swarajya had begun to gather momentum, the British government took many steps to suppress this movement. In 1919, a law known as the Rowlatt Act was passed. Under this act, the government could put people in prison without bringing them to court. All over the country there were strikes against this law.

On 13 April 1919 one such protest meeting was taking place in Amritsar in a garden called Jallianwala Bagh. To teach the people a lesson, General Dyer fired on the hundreds of people who had gathered there. At least 400 people, including children, were killed.

Can you explain why people opposed the Rowlatt Act so strongly?

“I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect it was my duty to produce if I was to justify my action. If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in



These were the words in which General Dyer defended himself before an Inquiry Commission after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

proportion. It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity.”

- General Dyer

The Non-cooperation Movement (1920-1922)

It was under such grave circumstances that Gandhiji launched the Non-cooperation Movement all over the country. After the revolt of 1857, this was the first major movement to take place at the same time all over the country against the British. Its objective was to display non-cooperation with the unjust British government. Special efforts were made by the Congress to get Hindus and Muslims together to oppose the British empire under a common programme called the Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movement.

“If the British want to run the government in India, they should run it themselves. Why should we handle their administration?” saying this, many people resigned their government jobs. Among those who resigned was Munshi Premchand, the great writer, who was then a teacher in the government school at Gorakhpur. He left his school job and began working in a nationalist newspaper.

Innumerable students left government schools and

colleges and began taking admission in swadeshi schools. For example in Bihar, 41 swadeshi high schools and 600 swadeshi middle and primary schools were opened in which 21,500 students had been admitted by January 1922.

All over the country, a large number of lawyers left their practice in the courts. In many places, people refused to vote in the municipal council elections.

There were dharnas on shops selling British cloth and on liquor shops. Apart from a boycott of British goods, there were also efforts to boost swadeshi goods. To this, Gandhiji added a campaign for people to spin their own cotton on a charkha (this cloth is known as khadi). In every house this spread the desire to make the country self-reliant. In Bihar alone, 48 khadi bhandars were opened to distribute charkhas and cotton among people and 3 lakh charkhas were distributed.

In towns big and small, rallies of hundreds of people would go out and court arrest before the police. The police would rain lathi-blows to stop them, but people would not raise a hand against the police. As one procession would be beaten up while peacefully courting arrest, another one would roll up from behind, also expecting to be arrested, shouting slogans such as "Inquilab Zindabad!" "We will spin our charkhas to take swarajya" and "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai!" People would resist the violence of the British government with peace and resolutely appeal for the truth (satyagraha).



This procession for non-cooperation was taken out in 1922. Why are they carrying the huge charkha?

When the prince of England came for a visit to India he was boycotted; people did not go to welcome him and the city of Bombay observed a strike on that day.

News of Gandhiji spread all over - in far away remote places, in small hamlets and villages everywhere.

Peasants, adivasis, and workers were all filled with the enthusiasm and hope that in a few days British rule would come to an end - and Gandhiji's swarajya would be established.

Wherever Gandhiji went in the country, tumultuous crowds would appear to see him. The peasants and adivasis had come to believe that under swarajya, Gandhiji would have the land tax reduced and put an end to the rules of the Forest Department. Throwing these rules to the wind, peasants and tribal people in many places took their cattle to graze in the jungles and also cut wood from the forests.

गर दूर यह सरकार न होगी

तब्दील गवर्नमेंट की रफ्तार न होगी
गर कौम असहयोग पर तय्यार न होगी।
यह हवालातें टूट अब और बसेंगी
इनमें तमाम कौम गिरफ्तार न होगी।
बन जाएंगे हर शहर में जलियाँवाले बाग
इस मुल्क से गर दूर यह सरकार न होगी।
हम ऐसी हुकूमत को मिटा देंगे बिल्कुल
गम से हमारे जो कभी गमख्बार न होगी।

(Song sung in the jails of
Uttarakhand between
1920-23)



Elated by the possibility of swarajya, the Santhal adivasis of Jhargram looted bazaars and jungles controlled by the zamindars.

In Jalpaiguri, Santhals with Gandhi caps on their heads, attacked a group of policemen. They had come to believe that no bullet would be able to kill them as long as they wore the Gandhi cap!

In the tea gardens of Surma valley, 8,000 workers left the gardens to return to their villages. They went announcing on their way that 'Gandhi Maharaj' would give them land in the village!

In 1920-22, under the leadership of Baba Ramchandra, the peasants of Awadh were already engaged in protest against the zamindars. Now peasants at a large number of places in Uttar Pradesh refused to pay rent to the zamindars in the name of Gandhiji.

Thus, the whole country was in a state of ferment and a very powerful desire to fight against injustice and oppression, to fight for their rights, flared up among the people.

Then, in 1922, an incident in a place called Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh led to a change in tactics. The police at Chauri Chaura had beaten up a peasant very badly. In protest, a large number of peasants came to attend a rally. But when they reached the police station, the police began firing on them. Enraged at this, the peasants set fire to the police station which resulted in the death of 22 policemen. The government arrested many people for the offence and tried them in court. After the trial, 19 peasants were hanged to death and 150 people were sentenced to exile.

Upon hearing about what had happened at Chauri Chaura, Gandhiji suddenly called off the Non-cooperation Movement. This was because he felt this incident proved that people were not really ready to act on the principle of non violence and satyagraha.

Write an imaginary discussion between Gandhiji and a peasant who had taken part in the protest at Chauri Chaura.

The Call for Total Self Rule and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-32)

In 1928, the British government constituted a commission under the leadership of a person named Simon, to frame the rules of administration for India. There was not a single Indian in this commission. This made it amply clear that the British government was not ready to believe that the people of India should have the right to run the administration of their own country.

Therefore, wherever, Simon went in India, there were rallies and strikes against him and the cry of "Simon go back!" resounded everywhere. The police used force to

suppress these protests. In one such police action, Lala Lajpat Rai was seriously injured (see below) and died a few days later. Saunders, the British officer responsible for this police action was later killed by revolutionaries in December 1928.



In November, 1928, the big zamindars of Awadh had organised a welcome ceremony for Simon at Lucknow. There were many processions in protest against this. People wrote, "Simon go back" on balloons and released them at the venue of the welcome ceremony. In the demonstrations that took place in this protest a large number of people were beaten up by the police, of whom Jawaharlal Nehru was one.



Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu breaking the Salt Act at Dandi

Once again there was a wave of agitations across the country in villages and in towns, big and small. At Raipur, Bhandara, Seoni, Amravati, Betul, adivasis and peasants defied the laws and cut wood from the forest in large quantities. The peasants of Uttar Pradesh not only refused to pay the chaukidari tax, they also withheld rent from the zamindars.

In 1929, the Congress decided that under no circumstances should people agree to remain under British rule. It was time to fight for total self-rule. Gandhiji launched the Civil Disobedience Movement as part of this struggle for **poorna swarajya**. That is, it was decided that the citizens of the country would openly, but peacefully, break the laws of the government.

Gandhiji decided to launch the movement by defying the Salt Act. According to this law, no one but the British government had the right to produce and sell salt. It could also claim a tax on it from the people. Paying a tax on salt was something that affected every person in the country, even poor, starving people. Gandhiji decided that the civil disobedience movement should begin by disobeying this very Salt Act. He marched on foot with his supporters from Sabarmati Ashram to a place called Dandi and on reaching the seashore, made salt. After this, salt was produced by people at hundreds of places along the coasts all over the country.

At other places, other laws of the government were broken. It was decided that the peasants would not pay the government any land tax. In areas where there were zamindars, the peasants were told to continue paying rent to the zamindars, but refuse to pay the chaukidari tax that the government took from them. In the forested areas of central India, the adivasis and peasants were asked to break the forest laws.

The government acted to suppress the movement. Gandhiji was arrested and kept behind bars. This step provoked many reactions against the British. For example, on hearing of Gandhiji's arrest, the workers of the cloth mills of Sholapur in Maharashtra went on strike. They took out rallies, burnt liquor shops and attacked the police and the buildings of the court, municipality and the railway station. For almost seven days the workers uprooted British rule in Sholapur and established their own separate administration! They appointed all the office-bearers from the district magistrate to the thanedar from among the people of the town.

The All-India Women's League marching in Kolkata



The traders of Mumbai took a public oath that they would not sell foreign cloth. Foreign cloth was boycotted on a large scale. As a result, whereas in 1929-30, 124 crore gaz of imported cloth had been brought to Mumbai, only 52 crore gaz of foreign cloth was brought in 1930-31.

By that time the Congress had already decided what the national flag of India would be like. At every possible place people tried to remove the flag of the British government and hoist the national flag of India.

All over the country, thousands of people were arrested. When they were presented before the magistrates and asked, "Do you have anything to say in your defence?" they would often reply, "We don't want to say anything to a British judge for we do not accept a British judge in the first place." The magistrates would sentence them and hundreds of people would be jailed for several months.

Make a list of the different actions people took to disobey the government.

People's Movements and Socialist Ideas

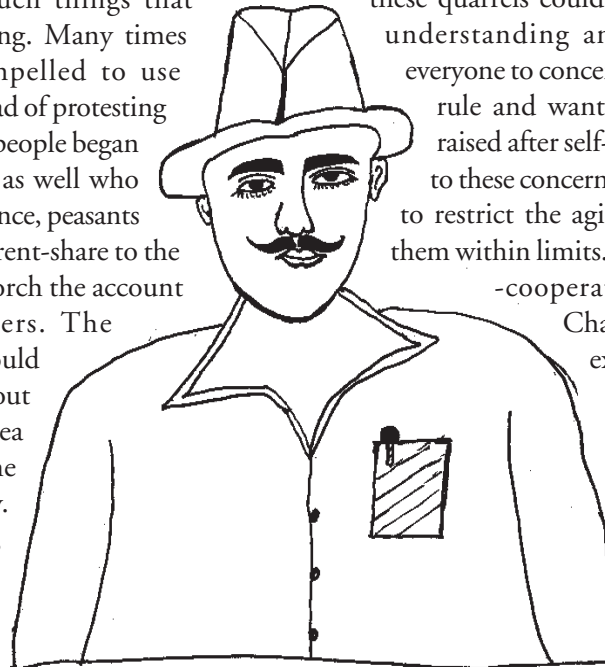
In those days, some new questions were coming to the forefront. Such as, should people fight only against British rule or also against powerful Indians who were responsible for injustice and inequality in society? Secondly, is violence absolutely wrong?

In the course of the freedom movement, many people began doing such things that Gandhiji felt were wrong. Many times people would be compelled to use violence. Secondly, instead of protesting only against the British, people began opposing those Indians as well who exploited them. For instance, peasants would stop paying their rent-share to the zamindars, and would torch the account books of moneylenders. The workers of the mills would stop their work to come out on strike. Workers in tea gardens would leave the gardens and go away. People spread all over, across remote villages and distant towns, had come to understand that Gandhiji

had commanded them to fight for truth and justice and they would all set out to fight for

truth and justice in their own way. They would believe that they were following the command of Gandhiji.

But Gandhiji was against violence and also did not want that people agitate against the zamindars, moneylenders and mill owners. He believed that these quarrels could be solved through mutual understanding and affection. He wanted everyone to concentrate on fighting the British rule and wanted that other problems be raised after self-rule had been attained. Due to these concerns, many times Gandhiji tried to restrict the agitations of people and keep them within limits. The withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident is an example of this.



Bhagat Singh was hanged by the British for his role in killing Saunders and in throwing a bomb in the Legislative Assembly Hall in 1928-29. He believed that a broad-based movement by the masses of peasants and workers was needed to abolish the exploitation of one class of people by another.

The ideas of people who held socialist beliefs differed somewhat from this. They supported movements which would bring justice to people from the British as well as from mill owners and zamindars. They wanted to bring about social, economic and political equality in the country.

For some years many socialists also worked in the Congress, but later they left the Congress and formed separate parties.

Among those who held socialist beliefs were S.A.Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, M.N.Roy, Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jaiprakash Narain, Jawaharlal Nehru etc. These people were beginning to conclude that organisations of peasants and adivasis should be formed and apart from the British, they should also struggle against the

zamindars, money lenders and mill owners so that the new nation formed after independence would be a nation of workers and peasants. These people tried to give greater importance to kisan sabhas and labour organisations in the National Movement. In 1925, the Communist Party was also formed in India to work for the interests of workers and peasants.

Assess whether socialist strategies would have made India's national movement stronger?

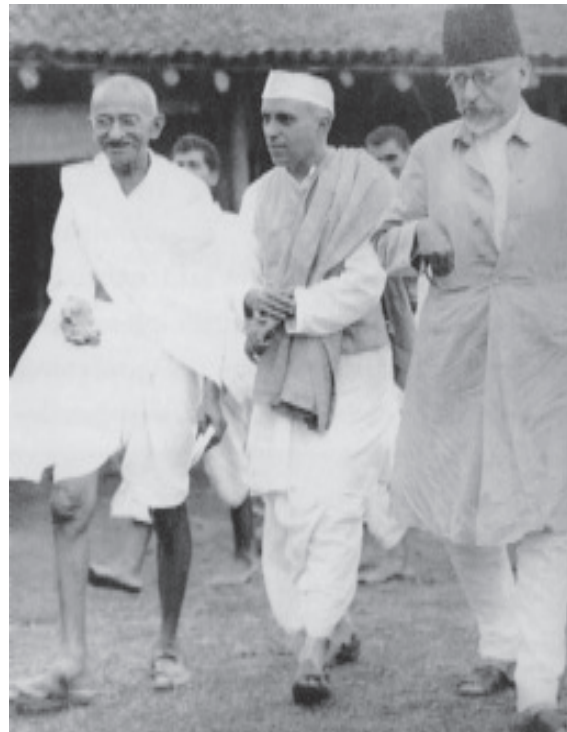
The Quit India Movement of 1942

In 1939, the Second World War broke out. It lasted until 1945. Britain, France, Russia and the United States of America together fought against Germany, Japan and Italy.

Britain wanted to use the people and money of India for this war. Congress demanded that in return for support in the war, India should be given self-rule. But the British government was in no mood to accept this demand. Ultimately, some 25,00,000 Indian soldiers fought for Britain.

It was in this context that in 1942 Gandhiji launched the Quit India Movement. Gandhiji, Nehru and other leaders were immediately arrested. This enraged the people even more. In the course of the protests, offices, courts, post offices and police stations of the British government were burnt in great numbers. Workers of Sholapur, Chennai and Kolkata went on strikes to demonstrate their protest and had clashes with the police. Thousands of people courted arrest.

Subhash Chandra Bose went over to Burma and raised an army with the help of Japan. With this Azad Hind Fauj, as his army was called, he marched towards Delhi. His intention was to defeat and drive away the British with the help of this army. In 1946, Indian sailors in the navy mutinied against the British government. There were strikes taking place everywhere. With such powerful opposition staring them in the face, the British rulers at last began to concede defeat. They felt weakened after



Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. What do you think they might have been discussing as this photo was taken?

the Second World War. In such a situation they found it extremely difficult to keep control over the rebellious people of India. In many such mass actions by workers, peasants, navymen, students etc, the Hindu and Muslim people worked unitedly. Nevertheless, communal minded leaders from both communities, were pressing for measures to protect their separate interests.



1947: Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Ismay, Lord Mountbatten, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah deciding to draw a border to partition India and create Pakistan.

Partition into India and Pakistan

Some people feared that Muslims would not be given equal opportunities in a free India, since they might be dominated by Hindus, who would be in the majority. Thus in 1940 the Muslim League, under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, launched a mass campaign to press for the creation of a separate Muslim nation called Pakistan.

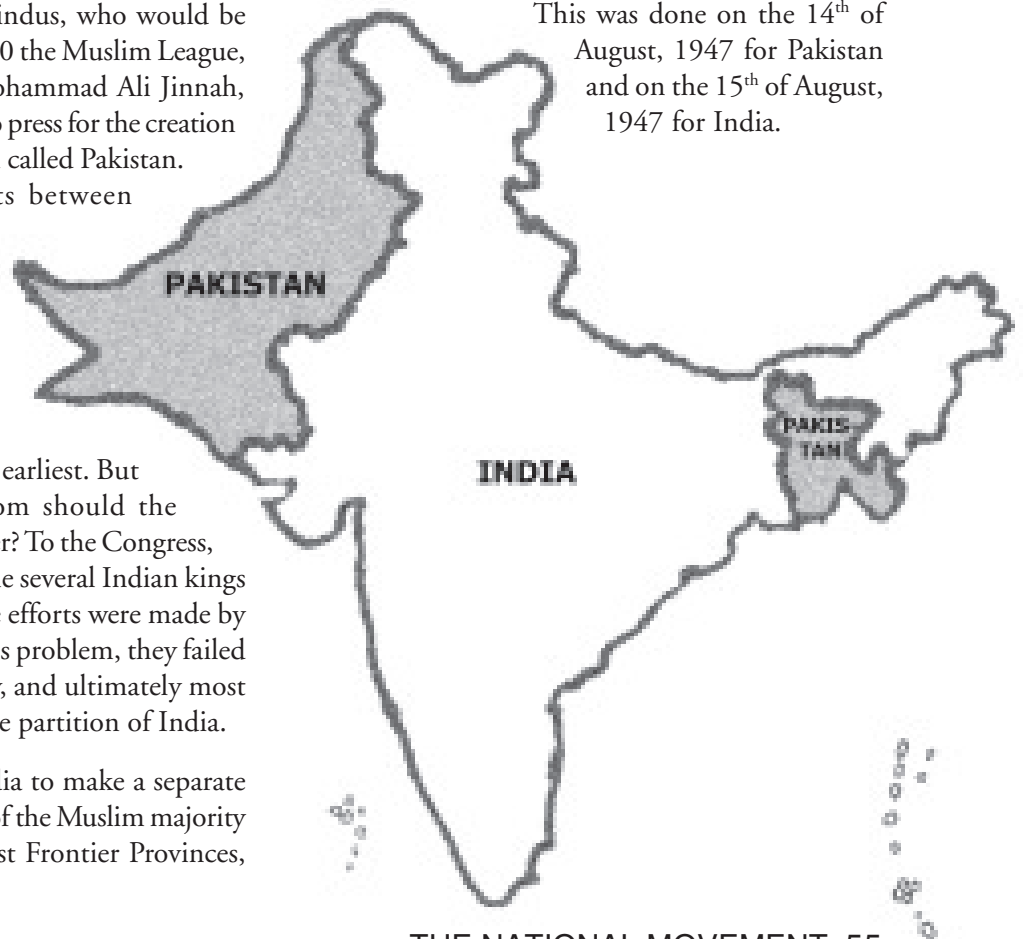
There were horrible riots between Hindus and Muslims on many different issues.

The Labour Party government had come into power in Britain after the World War. It agreed to give up control over India at the earliest. But the question was, to whom should the British hand over their power? To the Congress, to the Muslim League, to the several Indian kings - to whom? Though intense efforts were made by various leaders to resolve this problem, they failed to agree to a united country, and ultimately most of them agreed to accept the partition of India.

The British partitioned India to make a separate nation named Pakistan out of the Muslim majority areas of Punjab, North West Frontier Provinces,

Sindh and Bengal. It was decided to hand over power to India and Pakistan separately.

This was done on the 14th of August, 1947 for Pakistan and on the 15th of August, 1947 for India.



Many of the Hindus living in Pakistan began coming to India and many of the Muslims living in India began going to Pakistan. But innumerable Hindus and Muslims continued to stay where they were. During these days, violence and rioting broke out between the Hindus and Muslims and much fear and hatred was spread. Gandhiji was not willing to accept all this. At the old age of 77, he came out in the middle of horrifying riots to pacify people. He

said, "I want to fight it out with my life. I would not allow the Muslims to crawl on the streets of India. They must walk with self-respect."

He was adamant on the principle that in India, the Hindus and the Muslims have equal place. This was not accepted by the Hindu communalists. One of them, Nathu Ram Godse, shot Gandhiji dead on 30 January, 1948. How the situation reached this pass and who was responsible for it, is a very complex story.

The Rule of Rajas and Maharajas Ends

You know that apart from the areas under British rule, there were many parts in India that were ruled by rajas and maharajas. There were 562 such large and small kingdoms in India. They had accepted the sovereignty of the British but when the British began to leave India the kings wanted to rule their kingdoms separately and independently. But in these kingdoms, too, there had been movements of common people, who wanted the rule of the rajas, zamindars, and jagirdars to come to an end. They too wanted to participate in a national government elected by the people. They wanted to ensure and protect the democratic rights of the people.

In 1947-48, the new free government of India included these separate big and small kingdoms into the state of India. There were some kings who did not agree to this and the task of getting them around was accomplished by sending the army into their kingdoms. Rajas and nawabs were removed and put on pensions. This pension was known as the privy purse. The task of getting these agreements made with the kings and princes was accomplished chiefly by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. It was in this way that all the parts of today's India came together as one nation state.



Exercises

1. **Explain the meaning of each of the following terms and describe how people participated in the movements related to them.**

Boycott

Swadeshi

Non-cooperation

Civil Disobedience

2. **Discuss the importance of the role played by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in the National Movement.**
3. **What belief made Gandhiji prohibit the use of violence in movements of satyagraha?**
4. **Discuss why the people of India opposed the Rowlatt Act, the Salt Act and the Simon Commission.**
5. **What were the differences between Gandhiji and the socialists regarding the agitations of the common people?**
6. **Discuss the fears expressed by the Muslim League about the future of Indian Muslims.**
7. **What were the reasons behind the assassination of Gandhiji?**
8. **How many Indian kingdoms were there when the British left India? Can you think of the reasons why they were not keen to become part of the Indian nation? What place was given to these kings and nawabs in free India?**
9. **Did Hindus and Muslims struggle together for a free nation? Give some examples of such common struggles.**

Gandhiji coming out of a mazaar in Mehrauli a few days before his death.

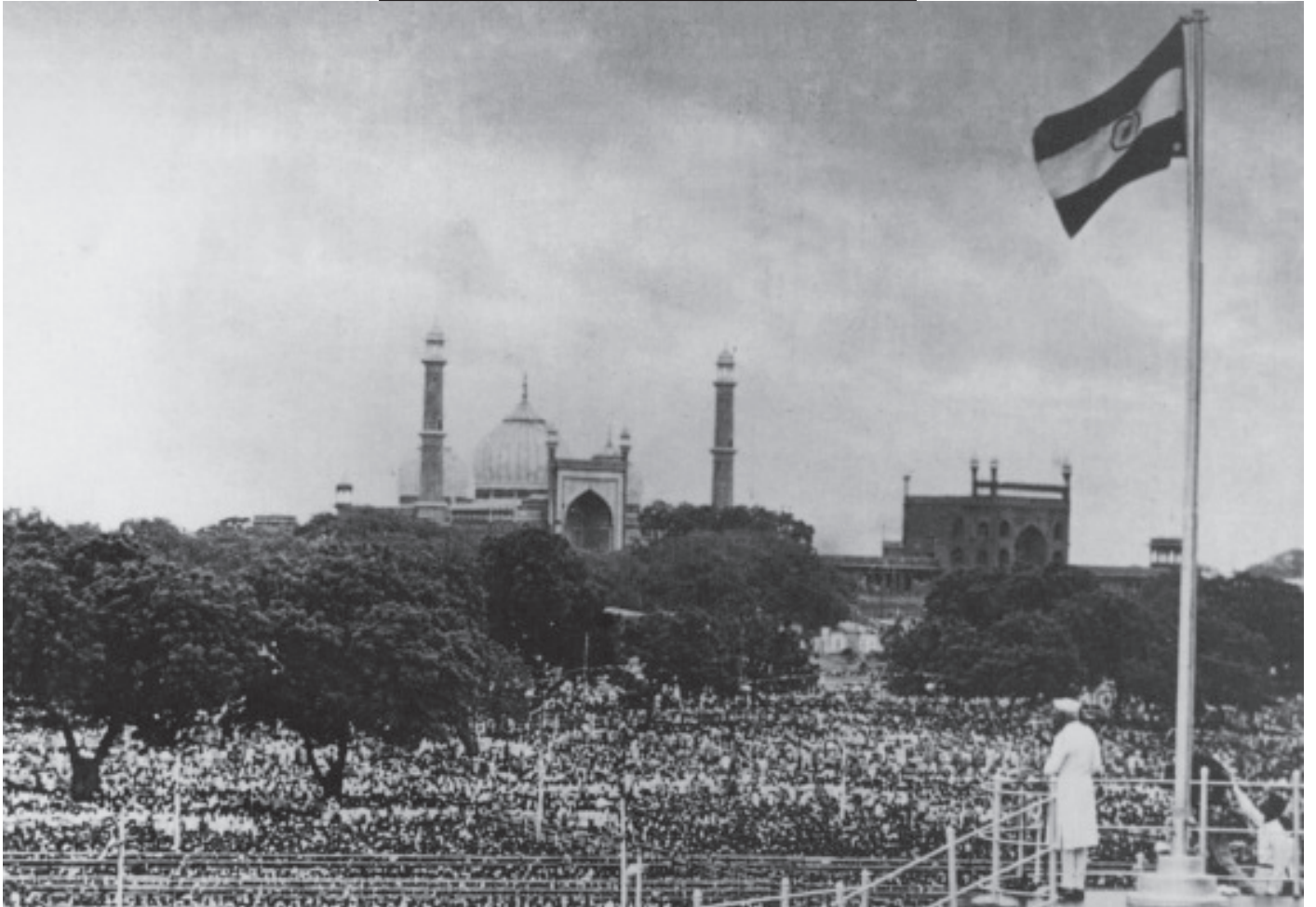


Below, people board a train to cross the new border. What happened to your family at the time of Partition?



ये वक्त की आवाज़ है मिलके चलो,
ये ज़िन्दगी का राज़ है मिलके चलो
मिलके चलो, मिलके चलो, मिलके चलो,
चलो भई मिलके चलो, मिलके चलो, मिलके चलो,
आज दिल की रंजिशें मिटा के आ,
आज भेद-भाव सब भुला के आ
आज़ादी से है प्यार जिन्हें देश से है प्रेम
कदम से कदम और दिल से दिल मिला के आ
ये भूख क्यूं, ये जुल्म का है ज़ोर क्यूं,
ये जंग-जंग-जंग का है शोर क्यूं
हर इक नज़र बुझी-बुझी, हर इक दिल उदास
बहुत फरेब खाए अब और फरेब क्यूं,
मिलके चलो,

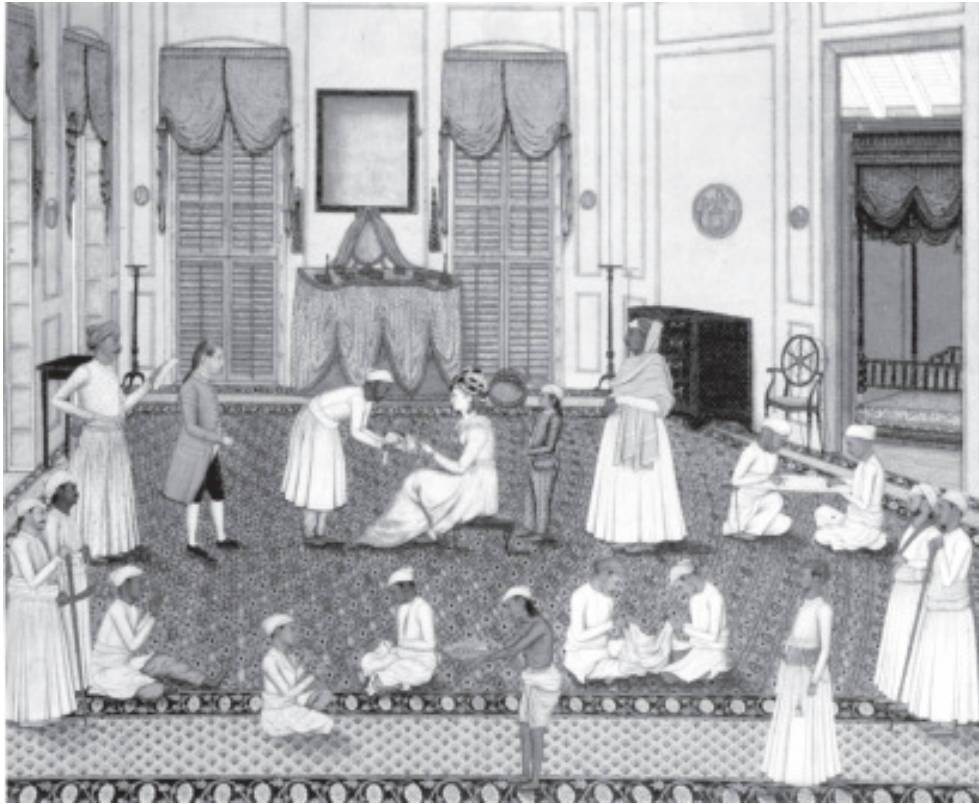
A song by Prem Dhavan sung during the
freedom movement



A huge crowd in Delhi on 15th August 1947, as Nehru raises the Indian flag over the newly independent country from the Red Fort. The Jama Masjid is visible in the background.

HISTORY

British Dominance



and Indian Independence

AN EKLAVYA PUBLICATION

